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# COLLECTED FRUITS OF OCCULT TEACHING

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# COLLECTED FRUITS OF OCCULT TEACHING

BY

A. P. SINNETT

AUTHOR OF "THE OCCULT WORLD," "ESOTERIC BUDDHISM"
"THE GROWTH OF THE SOUL," ETC.

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# PREFACE

THEOSOPHICAL literature, from the outset of the great movement it inaugurated, has been largely concerned with previously unknown laws governing the origin and destinies of humanity, the birth and progress of worlds, the coherent design of the Solar System, and, in short, with the interpretation, in the light of knowledge till recently reserved for a very few, of the stupendous Divine purpose underlying physical manifestation. My own earlier books, *The Occult World* and *Esoteric Buddhism*, forecast rather than embodied teaching along such lines, revealing the existence of those whom I called "the Elder Brethren of Humanity," who had risen above the level of generally current civilization, and thus had touch with the wisdom of the Divine Hierarchy. An experiment was in progress to ascertain if ordinary culture had attained a stage at which it would appreciate a flood of new thought relating to a science loftier than any dealing exclusively with phenomena perceptible to the physical senses, and in connection with that experiment I was privileged to receive a considerable volume of information relating to the early history of mankind millions of years antedating the range of historical record; also to the concatenation of worlds and the ultimate destinies of our own.

Though crude and incomplete, this preliminary sketch of occult science and of the agency through which, though unknown to the multitude, the purpose of creation was being worked out on the physical plane, thrilled the readers of the message all over the

civilized world to an extent which gave rise to an organization, the Theosophical Society, which now covers Great Britain, Europe generally, and the United States of America with innumerable branches. Fresh teaching and information relating to the great subjects enumerated above has meanwhile been flowing into my hands, and much has been embodied in my book, *The Growth of the Soul;* also, since the publication of that book, in a large number of articles in reviews, pamphlets, and " Transactions " of the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society over which I preside. The present volume collects these scattered contributions to our super-physical knowledge, still growing and expanding in its scope and value. At some later date the fundamental principles laid down in the earlier books, the illuminating interpretation of these in the essays now reproduced and further light on mysteries previously obscure, may constitute something resembling a complete spiritual science. But students need not wait for this result before assimilating the knowledge already acquired. During this life we are each of us " imprisoned in the five senses," and, though thought reaches out far beyond them, its range is limited by the capacity of the physical brain. In time that capacity will expand. Ideas easily grasped by the man of modern culture are beyond the comprehension of the savage. The improved intellectual mechanism of future generations will no doubt deal freely with conceptions which present culture cannot appreciate. Spiritual science, however, is an infinitude, and no attempt to interpret it in physical plane language will ever be more than suggestive and alluring.

But it is equally true that human faculty on this plane of life will develop as time goes on under the influence of effort to expand its range. Unconsciously in most cases students of the spiritual science within

our reach will do more than profit by understanding it so far. They will have established a claim on Nature for improved vehicles of consciousness in later lives, and will have contributed to raise the level of human understanding. I am sure the experience of many theosophists will show that within the limits of the current life ideas can now be easily handled in thought, which could not have been held in the mind during earlier periods of study. These may still defeat the resources of physical plane speech, but they forecast intellectual conditions that will ultimately outrun those resources. That state of things should be a stimulus to theosophical study in whatever direction it may tend, and few of the essays in this volume will be found destitute of hints that will attract thought into some new channel of spiritual, or, at least, of super-physical enlightenment.

In no direction, as we press forward exploring the mysteries of Nature, may we expect to attain finality. Broad principles may be firmly established and at first they seem to be clearly outlined. Search for detail soon renders the outline shadowy without suggesting any distrust of the broad principle. For example, the most fundamental teaching of Theosophy in relation to current human life shows us Reincarnation as essential to the spiritual growth of each Ego. In one of the essays in this book on *Theosophical Teachings liable to be Misunderstood*, so much detail is added to the original teaching on this subject that when we absorb this the broad idea without that detail seems as likely to mislead as to instruct. Earlier statements concerning the mechanism of the Solar System, the planetary chains, the successive "manvantaras," etc., were vividly significant at first. They remain as revelations of natural truth that we can never lose touch with, but

surrounded by the later interpretation dealt with in some of the present essays, concerning the way in which the planetary chains are concatenated together and the way in which the manvantaras expand and contract, the first sketches of the truth are seen to fail altogether in showing it illustrative of the beautiful symmetry and purpose of the Divine design. Some readers of the earlier books are too easily satisfied. The genuine occult student will never stand still. Henry V., preparing for battle at Agincourt, declared that: " If it be a sin to covet honour, I am the most offending soul alive." And the occult student may think of knowledge—the true knowledge, the comprehension and appreciation of Divine manifestation—in the same heroic spirit.

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# COLLECTED FRUITS OF OCCULT TEACHING

## THIS WORLD'S PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE

RELIGIOUS emotion was, till recently, at war with science—especially indignant with astronomy for disturbing primitive conceptions as to the way this world was first opened for business. But a bold application of the principle that biblical language need not be taken at the foot of the letter gradually enlarged its interior meaning until the rotundity and annual revolution of the earth were fitted in to the story told in Genesis. Evolution as accounting for the human form then came within sight of a gloomy toleration—if Modernists insisted on it. That, however, which religious emotion has not yet quite realized is the sublime truth that, the more we are enabled to penetrate the deep mysteries of Nature, the more profoundly reverent we become in contemplating the impenetrable infinitudes of that Divine Power which operates alike in guiding the growth of protoplasm and the majestic mechanism of the Solar System. Critics who preferred—when Darwin first shattered the paraphernalia of medieval theology, like a bull in a china shop—to remain on the side of the Angels, made the immense mistake of supposing that the Angels (regarded as agents of Divinity) would be disestablished if we began to approach an understanding of the way they did their work. A view growing familiar with some students of Nature

involves the idea that even natural forces are the expression of conscious will on some exalted levels of spiritual potency; that the so-called "laws" of Nature are definite Divine enactments—not merely blind attributes of matter. And we can hardly begin to form a rational conception of the world's development under Divine control without including this idea in our thinking.

The reconciliation of religion and science has been advancing by leaps and bounds of late, and "Seven Men of Science," all of the foremost rank, recently published a collection of addresses frankly declaring their belief in God, as a fundamental idea underlying scientific study. The record of the old "Conflict" is now ancient history. But this result is not a conclusion. It is only a beginning. The seven scientific leaders, quite in agreement as regards the main proposition, may be groping in various directions in the search for a definite mental picture of the God in whom they believe. Perhaps all would admit that the reality does not lend itself to the formation of a mental picture. Religion reconstructed on scientific principles must build up a conception of Divinity by working from below upward. The earlier fashion attempted to work from above downward. "In the beginning" certain things happened, we were told—by teachers who, quite reasonably in dealing with young people, ignored the idea that Eternity has no beginning. But now that embryology must be recognized as a method of creation when we talk about the human form we feel the need of an embryology as applied to planetary creation. And so we come to recognize the subtle, mysterious laws of organic growth—not as displacing the Divine creative Will, but as the agency by which it is fulfilled in physical manifestation.

So by degrees, with help available at the present day,

for those especially who realize that human consciousness can be reached by other channels of perception besides the five senses, we reach the idea that Divine agency is worked out through an enormously elaborate and magnificent hierarchy of Spiritual Beings, beyond whom, in dazzling and (as yet) impenetrable mystery, there exists an incomprehensibly sublime Power, of whom the Sun may be thought of as the physical symbol.

In the mental search for God we may pause at this stage of the effort. Human intelligence is more limited in its scope than early philosophers imagined, but is quite limitless as regards its expectations. It presumes to talk about the Divine power which accounts for the whole universe. Distant stars, though to be counted by millions and mostly gigantic compared with the star, or Sun, to which we belong, must come into the same creative scheme as the sparrows in Kensington Gardens. The Sunday School teacher can be content with nothing less than a God who is responsible for the Milky Way as well as for the milky mothers of the field. And medieval painters have even presented us with his portrait. In some foreign gallery I have seen him included in a family group—the Father with a long beard is in an armchair with the Third Person of the Trinity as a pigeon perched on the back, and the Son in a chair of somewhat lesser dignity beside him. Enlightened members of the English Church would generally be shocked at this grossly materialistic presentation of the Divine Mystery, forgetful of their own declaration of belief that Christ ascended into Heaven and " sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty." From *The Fudge Family in Paris* we learn that a certain forcible expression, impossible in English, " doesn't sound half so shocking in French," and on the same principle an idea merely

formulated in words that no one stops to invest with a meaning is not half so shocking as the same idea depicted on canvas by means of oil colour.

In the days of the old " Conflict " those who dealt with it—Draper and others—dwelt especially on the savage ferocity with which the early Church endeavoured to stifle astronomical discovery. Faith, at that time, might have been correctly described as " the faculty that enables us to believe what we know to be untrue." It was endangered by the astronomical emphasis of the untruthfulness in question, but in the long run, as astronomy held the field, faith fell into line with discovery, and in spite of ecclesiastical opposition became ennobled in character. The God of a Semitic tribe might with an effort of imagination be fitted into an armchair. The God of a Solar System, including a central Sun many thousand times bigger than the Earth—and the orbit of Neptune thousands of million miles in diameter—was in a different order of magnitude. And if we attempt to strain imagination by looking upward in thought at that inconceivable splendour, we may realize the futility of the effort by attempting to gaze directly with open eyes on a fine day at the physical Sun. Human sight will not tolerate the unveiled light. Human understanding will not bring the God-idea, once cleared of blundering theology, to a definite focus.

But astronomical discovery does not come to a standstill even after measuring the orbit of Neptune and accounting for the canals of Mars, nor after attempting, however unsuccessfully, to set time limits to the radiant energy of the Sun. We are all agreed—though astronomy affords scope for disagreement in some directions—that the whole Solar System—the Sun attended by his family of planets—is moving through space at about the rate of twelve to fourteen miles per second. Whither is it bound ?

Greenwich authorities would hardly yet venture on a definite reply, but we may if we like indulge, in connection with that question, in the fascinating pursuit known to science as " extrapolation "— the application to regions of thought outside the range of definite observation, of the assumption that laws operative within that range hold good to infinitudes beyond. Almost all the Heavenly bodies—quite all if we merely except meteorites and some comets—move in elliptical orbits more or less closely approximating to the circular form. Plainly, it is much more probable that the Sun's motion is in conformity with this general principle, than that it is a blind rush in a straight course, which would infallibly in the long run give rise to a cosmic catastrophe. If the uniformities of Nature are maintained, the Sun must be revolving in an orbit around some definite sidereal centre. Obviously such an orbit must be so vast that any measurable arc will appear to be a straight line.

Now I must venture to outrun even extrapolation in the explanation I have to give. I have been permitted in the pages of the *Nineteenth Century* to maintain the position that, in the course of the present " Armageddon," Unseen Powers embodying loftier knowledge than common humanity has yet reached are taking part in the struggle. Some of us in conscious touch with them are sometimes with their help enabled to anticipate scientific discovery. In that way I was concerned, some dozen years before the discovery of Radium, with anticipations relating to the constitution of matter, ultimately verified by that discovery and subsequent work based upon it. Happily those anticipations were published at the time, so their character as a successful forecast is not open to dispute. In another direction certain future conclusions in connection with astronomy may be anticipated in their turn. The centre around which

the Solar System is gravitating will be found to be the star Sirius. Common knowledge gives us an approximate measure of some stellar distances. The figure accepted by astronomers for the moment as the distance of Sirius, taking " light-years " as the unit, is 8.8, or call it eight and three-quarters. A light-year is the distance light crosses in a year, moving at the rate of 186,000 miles per second. So it would be inconvenient to give stellar distances in miles. Moreover, there is a wide margin for possible errors in calculations concerned with the parallax of stars. Perhaps it will be found that Sirius is a bit farther off than the currently accepted calculation assumes, but anyhow the real distance is in the same order of magnitude. Estimates of the size and luminosity of Sirius vary very widely—from 300 to 1000 times the size and brightness of our Sun, but either guess fits in with the main idea to be grasped. Obviously our Sun cannot be the only one that revolves around Sirius. Directly that idea is appreciated, we realize that Sirius must be the central sun of a vast system, in which such suns as ours must be, to Sirius, what the planets are to our Sun.

That this is so, can only be ascertained definitely by those in touch with sources of information not yet within general reach, but at all events, meanwhile, as a hypothesis, the statement is clearly in harmony with the uniformities of Nature. To regard our Solar System and all the others presumably represented by the millions of stars in the sky, as scattered at random about space would be insulting to Supreme Wisdom and Omnipotence. The conception could only be acceptable to thinkers at the kindergarten stage. Certainly up to the middle of the last century grown and grave men did discuss the question whether this was the only inhabited world in the Universe, but increasing intelligence has rendered us at once

wiser and more modest than when a doubt on that subject was possible. I need not go over the evidence that makes an important group of astronomers certain that Mars (to confine our attention for a moment to our own Solar System) is the abode of life not entirely unlike our own. The other planets may not have climatic conditions like our own, but the resources of Nature may easily provide vehicles of life appropriate to any conditions of temperature; while those of us who know something more about life, consciousness and spiritual growth than mere surgery would suggest, regard with disdain the idea that any worlds —whether around our sun or in the infinitudes of space—can be mere inanimate masses of matter destitute of the loftier purposes that life implies.

Just for the present all information relating to the Sirian Cosmos must remain hypothetical until the astronomy of the future overtakes the forecast, but its value as illuminating reverent imagination reaching in the direction of Divinity is very great. It helps us to realize that in all such upward reaching we must blend with the idea of which we are in search, the idea of infinity. In the search within the limits of our own Solar System we are hopelessly dazzled long before we touch those limits. But the conception of the Sirian Cosmos shows us that incomprehensible as the Solar Divinity may be—"That" (our miserable word "he" is degrading in such use) can only be in some dependent relationship to the Divinity guiding the whole Sirian Cosmos; in other words that "God" is an infinite hierarchy. Faintly we realize that God—when we think of the Sirian Cosmos—is, in some wholly incomprehensible way, greater even (in a stupendous degree) than God, when we think of the Solar System and of the various worlds within it of which ours is one. And, indeed, human intelligence, limited in its grasp of

detail, unlimited when reaching out towards infinitude, perceives, the moment this last idea is touched, that the Sirian Cosmos itself must be in relationship with some still more expanded and sublime organism; that Sirius cannot be a stationary body but must itself, attended by all its family of solar systems, be dependent on some other centre of energy, on some other superior manifestation of the infinite God. It is futile even to speculate as to where or what that centre may be, but the feeling that it must exist vaguely hints at a unity pervading the whole visible universe. Along that line of thought, however, lies a mental bewilderment that bars further progress. We can play in imagination still with astronomical figures. The bright star Arcturus is said to be 140 light-years distant from us, and yet it shines nearly as brilliantly as Sirius. What must be its actual magnitude and lustre? What must be its place in the universal scheme? And some other stars of almost equivalent brilliancy are beyond parallactic measurement altogether. But the purpose which all fulfil must be within the grasp of infinite Divinity.

Science, growing more and more intimately welded with spiritual aspiration as human intelligence expands, grants us some mental illumination as we seek to penetrate, so far as that may be possible, the mysteries of the Divine Hierarchy. Certainly, if we turn our attention from the appalling magnitudes of astronomy to the phenomena of the infinitely little, the measurements we have to deal with are equally bewildering. Physicists tell us that a cubic centimetre of water contains thirty trillions of molecules. That if a glass globe four inches in diameter were absolutely empty and air molecules admitted at the rate of a hundred millions a second 50,000 years would elapse before the globe was full. Such figures are more amusing than instructive, but they may

help us, to some extent, in our attempt to formulate a conception of the Divine Hierarchy. The attributes of the physical molecules—the laws they obey, are obviously as much an expression of Divine Will as the forces that regulate the march of solar systems in the Sirian Cosmos. Within our Solar System the Divine Hierarchy extends downward, as definitely as, beyond it, it extends upward; and though, as we attempt to understand it in its lower levels, we shall soon find mental difficulties almost as insuperable as those attending efforts in the other direction, we can, with help from certain sources of information, arrive at some intelligible conclusions.

Astronomy may still help us to some extent. The conditions that must attend life in the various planets of our system must obviously differ very widely. Temperature may vary from below that of ice to above that of steam. Vehicles of consciousness—bodies of whatever matter may be suitable, must vary accordingly. We may safely assume that while some of the fundamental laws of Nature may hold good throughout the system, others, for example all appertaining to organic growth, may need local modification. Each world must be controlled, even as regards its physical manifestation, by appropriate Divine Agency. And very little progress beyond primitive theology makes us sure that—first of all as regards our own world—there are teeming regions of life that lie beyond the cognition of the physical senses. Talk therefore of our familiar planets should properly relate to *planetary schemes*, embracing much more than the visible globes. So we reach the conception that for each planetary scheme the Divine will of the whole Solar System must transmit itself through an agency that is still so Divine in its character as to dazzle our mental sight.

None the less a very important stage in our study

of the Divine Hierarchy is reached when we realize the principle of agency as working through it. The mind leaps to the conclusion that this principle must be operative right down to the subtle activities of Nature that we are in the habit of summing up in the word " Evolution." For the verification of this conjecture we must obviously be dependent on information received from those sources of super-physical knowledge above referred to, such information in turn being only subject to the check imposed by our own critical faculties. Does it appeal to our intelligence as essentially reasonable in its character ? Leaving that question to be determined later, I will first endeavour to describe the agency through which the purpose of the Divine Power presiding over the planetary scheme to which this world belongs, appears to be worked out in physical manifestation.

We have to think of the Unseen realms of Nature as inhabited by hosts of spiritual beings concerned with the direction of the forces (emanating from super-Divine Will) which not merely guide organic growth but provide for the growth of the spiritual essence with which such growth is associated. Language is apt to break down in one's hands as a means of conveying ideas that are inextricably blended with still more subtle underlying ideas. We are living in a world the whole *raison d'être* of which resides in the opportunity it affords for the growth and expansion of spiritual consciousness. The experiences of consciousness in association with physical environment are the conditions providing for its growth. We may plunge down in search of the beginnings of such growth to levels of consciousness far below those of humanity. But leaving that vast area of thought untrodden, the growth of spiritual consciousness as focussed in humanity is itself under the guidance of Divine agency whose perfect uniformity of intention,

fulfilling the Divine purpose, would, if we could see only a little more clearly, present to imagination a system of natural law on the moral plane as unalterable as the natural laws relating to physical matter that we deal with in the chemist's laboratory. Those natural laws of the moral plane are entangled with variable influences arising from human free will, but that only renders the task of the Divine agents who guide them more delicate, not less specific.

The first glimpses we get in this way, of the intricacy of the work carried out by the hosts of Divine agents engaged in guiding the world's growth, prepare us to find that a distribution of function is carried out in that wonderful realm of activity, so that while one great host is concerned with the growth of consciousness, another is concentrated on the task of guiding the growth of form—of carrying out the idea that, for want of a better comprehension of the process, we call the principle of Evolution. And such agency works again in its contact with matter through lower agency right down to the manipulation of the molecule. The Divine Hierarchy is infinite both ways; inconceivably exalted and inconceivably minute, but in the direction of minutiæ still conscious and purposeful. Intelligence, with a certain range of freedom within limits, guides not only the gradual improvement of the human form, *pari passu* with the progress of spiritual growth, but the humbler development of form in the animal kingdom and even variation in the colouring of plants and flowers. The agency concerned with such work cannot be discerned by the physical senses, but finer senses can already sometimes cognize its operation, though most of us are still too young in evolution to have come into full possession of all the faculties latent in human nature. "We are ancients of the earth and in the morning of the times."

So brief a sketch as this must be content in some

directions with mere faint hints. How do the Divine agents concerned, as declared above, with the evolution of form translate their superphysical powers to the physical plane? The answer has to do with what may be called the semi-intelligent mechanism of Nature. The mere phrase is bewildering, but it deals with certain aspects of Nature that science must concern itself with before long. "Elemental Agency" cannot properly be regarded as belonging to the Divine Hierarchy even in its lower levels, but it constitutes a vast subsidiary evolution by itself; cosmic in its character: related to much more than the interests of this world alone; beginning on levels commensurate with the electron in magnitude and importance, rising to conditions in which definite forms in certain fine orders of matter are identifiable by observers, with adequately clairvoyant senses, as associated with specific functions in Nature. Elementals constitute the link between will—human or Divine—and physical manifestation. Obviously the subject is one of stupendous magnitude. No fire could burn, no plant could grow, no human being could live on the physical plane, and carry on all that business transacted within his body of which he is wholly unconscious, without elemental agency. When science comes to grapple with the intricacies of this so far hidden aspect of Nature, it will look back to its present condition as one barely emerging from the dark ages.

Thus vast and complicated is the agency by which Divine Will is fulfilled. But we have to struggle as best we may with the idea of hierarchies within hierarchies. The world is a theatre in which a stupendous drama is in process of performance. The scenery and decorations are provided by Divine agency, and the actors are responsible—if we push the metaphor to its extreme limits—for the parts

they play. In other words, while Divine agency invests them with their opportunity, their own free will is left to determine the use they make of this. But they must not be allowed to wreck the whole undertaking by too gross a misuse of that free will. The drama is intended to have a happy ending. So over and above or apart from the hierarchies that provide the conditions Divine ordination provides for a governing hierarchy that does not actually control the actors—put words into their mouths, so to speak, or manage them like marionettes—but causes them to feel disagreeable consequences from blundering; invests them with larger consciousness as they willingly fall into line with the Divine idea. Of course that governing hierarchy is merged in its loftier levels with the superior agents of infinite Divinity, but on its less exalted levels is in close touch with our own humanity. This thought leads up to what is perhaps the most important idea of all that I have been endeavouring to suggest. Humanity itself recruits the governing hierarchy. Its members on the first important level above ordinary humanity have been, at some remote periods in the past, human beings like (the best of) ourselves. We speak of them now, those of us who have the privilege of more or less knowing them, as great adepts, Masters of Wisdom, Brothers of the Great White Lodge, or by any other phrases approximately appropriate. They are in normal periods equal to the task—under Divine inspiration of which they, of course, are vividly conscious—of carrying on the government of the world in so far as it needs adjustment or interference. They are our Allies in this ghastly abnormal period in which humanity is confronted by an attack from such elevated levels of spiritual potency that, great as their power undoubtedly is, they can only for the moment resist the awful unseen foe inspiring our

physical plane enemies, whilst awaiting intervention, ultimately certain if it becomes necessary, from lofty levels of Divine Power.

Will this view of the great current crisis seem, to some critics, at variance with the main idea that this world, like all others, is governed by an infinite Divine Hierarchy of quite limitless capacity and directing human evolution from the realms of infinite Love? The problem has been dealt with at some length in articles for the *Nineteenth Century*,[1] and need only be referred to now. Freewill, in one word, is the answer. The ultimate evolution of individual humanity can only be accomplished by investing each unit with the Divine attribute of freewill in a greater or less degree. Half-fledged humanity of the kind around us in abundance is hardly conscious of the extent to which it enjoys this attribute. It becomes more and more available as spiritual evolution proceeds. By the hypothesis it may be exerted to fulfil the purpose of Divine love, in so far as that may be discerned, or it may be perverted to antagonize that purpose. Within the limits of our humanity the perversion may not be carried to any extreme degree. But other humanities have preceded our own and have reached exalted conditions in which free will for good or evil was enormously expanded in its scope. In that way it has come to pass that spiritual evil has assumed colossal proportions until at last it has challenged Divine Power on very high levels. That is the challenge with which we, on our humble level, are now contending. We feel sure of ultimate success because the mighty spiritual powers of evil at war with the Divine idea of humanity (on this plane with ourselves, the Allied armies) have

[1] "Our Unseen Enemies and Allies" and "When the Dark Hosts are Vanquished," *Nineteenth Century and After*, October and November, 1915.

had a definite origin that we can discern and have reached a definite height of spiritual power. However exalted that power, it is finite. The Divine Hierarchy is infinite. At whatever level Satanic power may confront it on equal terms, Divine resources above that level are limitless. If exerted they must subdue the finite power, and we have reason to feel sure that sooner or later they will be exerted to avert the ruin of the world.

I have said that our Allies in this great struggle—the Masters of Wisdom, or by whatever name we like to call them—the Chieftains of Humanity, of whose existence, till recent years, humanity at large was wholly ignorant, are recruited from amongst ourselves although none the less constituting the first great stage of advancement, counting from below upward, of the Divine Hierarchy. But while, beyond them, conditions of existence begin to transcend physical brain comprehension we can understand to some extent the capacities and powers of the beings who have attained to them; and the functions appertaining to their stage of evolution. Certainly that mighty organization includes some who reached high spiritual dignity before this world's children had emerged from early races, in one sense their nursery. But none the less it includes some who have been to outward appearance within historic periods mere ordinary men. The world, indeed, has never been without a great ruling Brotherhood, though at one time it was indebted for this to a Senior humanity. The phrase needs amplification to be fully intelligible, but a very little thought will give reason to the idea that the history of this world and of our human races is not a "complete short story," in itself, but an episode in universal history.

As our humanity became sufficiently evolved to furnish recruits for the great ruling Brotherhood

its existence was allowed to filter out gradually into the consciousness of the few candidates available. These were the few whose ardour in the pursuit of lofty knowledge and whose moral development were such that they could be trusted not to misuse enhanced knowledge. The world at large was not generally ripe for the proper appreciation of the fact that powers and knowledge beyond ordinary experience were attainable by certain means. A premature dissemination of that idea might have had unfortunate consequences. But for the chosen few it was revealed, and so it has come to pass that at the present day the great Brotherhood includes many members who have been men like (the best of) ourselves within a comparatively recent period.

Experience of ordinary life does not enable us to understand their place in Nature altogether and completely. They work to a great extent on planes of consciousness beyond the cognition of the ordinary senses. They wield forces as yet unknown to Science, using the physical body merely as a vehicle to be occupied or left aside as convenience may suggest: the finest clairvoyance which ordinary students of that wonderful faculty have ever met with is, compared with theirs, a rushlight to an electric arc; and physical matter itself is plastic in their hands. In the higher vehicles of consciousness distances about the world mean nothing, and withal they are of course in absolute harmony with the Divine Will.

The view thus reached—that shows us the humanity to which we all belong as designed to recruit the first, as we look upward, of the spiritual degrees that in the aggregate constitute the Divine Hierarchy—is of supreme significance. Properly understood it invests humanity with an entirely new meaning, as compared with that which merely treats each item in that humanity as destined to an infinitely continued

individual existence, happy or unhappy, as the case may be. The crude fancy thus presented to the mind by commonplace religion may have served its purpose while the world was young, as coaxing or warning an ignorant multitude not yet ripe for a more profound conception, but philosophically it is beneath criticism. The sublime idea, as directly affecting ourselves, to be derived from a conception, even if only broad and incomplete, of the Divine Hierarchy is that which shows it to be a coherent entirety stretching upward from this world as we know it, in the direction of absolute infinity. It enables us, for the first time, to comprehend this world's place in the Universe. A misdirected modesty leads some of us occasionally to talk of this world as a small planet amongst many greater, attached to a tenth-rate sun in a Universe richly stocked with others of enormously greater magnitude and brilliancy. The infinitesimal creatures on its surface can only be regarded, in this way, as important in their own estimation; no more so really than the grains of sand on the seashore. That view is no less erroneous than depressing. The humanity for the sake of evolving which this world exists, represents a definite stage in the evolution of Divine consciousness, which, besides its limitless expansion towards infinity, is susceptible of infinite accretion from below. There are no stages in the Divine Hierarchy that have *not* been recruited, in some unfathomable past, from humanities more or less resembling our own. Eternity stretches both ways and the world—the solar systems of to-day, though figures would fail to suggest their duration as measured in our time—are manifestations of Divine power that have succeeded others and will be in turn succeeded. We count the nebulæ in the Heavens, and watch the growth of future suns destined to bear their progeny

of future worlds and future candidates for Divine evolution.

But we need not torment imagination by following that thought too far. It is enough to know that here and now we are candidates for Divine evolution; that there is no solution of continuity from this stage of existence up to those that have been faintly suggested in these pages and are hopelessly dazzling to mental vision as we dwell in thought on their attributes and power. This humanity of ours, even as we contemplate its visible varieties from the savage to the greatest philosopher, is obviously a vast procession moving through the ages, each immortal spirit ever seeking new and new incarnations till gathered experience and effort entitle it to those of the loftiest order. The appreciation of this idea marks a huge advance beyond the primitive conception of an eternal perpetuation of each grotesquely incomplete being. But such an appreciation is merely a step in the direction of the grander conception. The highest level of moral and intellectual attainment on the stage of this world's potentialities is but a new beginning, a point of departure for a progress beyond the precise comprehension of physically incarnate intelligence, but happily not altogether veiled from our view. No matter for the moment whether there be other worlds affording still more favourable opportunities for embodied consciousness. That is no concern of ours. We may be fully content to know that however the preparatory processes leading up to the Divine Hierarchy may be provided for in other worlds, this of ours has a place in the Universe in direct relation with all the infinitudes that simple word represents—with all that the most illuminated reverence can suggest when we presume to speak of God.

## FUTURE LIFE—AND LIVES

NATURALLY enough the tragedies of the War have imparted thrilling interest to some questions carelessly disregarded by the multitude during normal periods. Is there an after life for all of us when we "die"? Can we find out anything about it in advance? Can we communicate with those who have already passed on? Most current essays dealing with such perplexities have a ludicrous aspect for millions of spiritualists in constant touch with departed friends, for all occult students and for most psychic researchers. A writer in these pages last month calmly asserts that communication with the dead "has never been definitely proved to be anything but delusion or fraud." If equally ignorant in other directions he might deal in the same way with any scientific discovery, say, the retrograde motion of some planetary satellites, or the transmutations of radium. The vast literature of spiritualism is flooded with proof of the main idea. More recently the literature of occult research is rich in detail concerning the conditions of the after life.[1] To say that

[1] Simply to show that I am not talking at random I will mention a few books the perusal of which would guard writers of a certain class from making themselves ridiculous: *Spirit-Identity, Psychography, The Higher Aspects of Spiritualism, Spirit Teachings, A Wanderer in Spirit Lands, The Story of Ahrinziman, Colloquies with an Unseen Friend, Out of the Vortex, After Death, Not Silent though Dead, In the Next World, Do Thoughts Perish? The Hidden Side of Things, The Inner Life, Esoteric Buddhism, The Growth of the Soul, The Occult World, The Secret Doctrine, A Study in Consciousness, The Ancient Wisdom.* Some of the books named

knowledge thereof has made "no substantial progress whatever" is like asserting that since Galvani's experiment with frogs' legs our knowledge of electricity has made no progress whatever. *Raymond*, attracting deserved attention on account of its authorship, is only the latest contribution to innumerable records of a similar kind, the cumulative significance of which is overwhelming, while all who are patient and painstaking get personal conviction for themselves.

Spiritualists for the most part are content with this. They know their departed friends still live and get assurance of their welfare. They look forward with confidence to their own future. Occult students find that, besides evidence of that order, minute information relating to the conditions of the after life can be obtained by people still in this life when gifted with clairvoyant faculties of an appropriate kind. Abundant information is accumulating in the literature of occult research along these lines. In no department of human activity has more remarkable progress been made during the last thirty years than in this branch of superphysical science. That progress has carried the occult student far beyond elementary discoveries relating to the immediate experiences of the next life. Certainly these are intensely interesting, but do not in themselves enable us to obtain a comprehensive grasp of the whole scheme of evolution to which humanity belongs. Comprehension of the next phase of life marks a great advance beyond the crass ignorance that doubts or denies even that, but it only helps us relatively a little way in the direction of understanding our place in Nature and our ultimate destinies. Later developments of occult science

relate to Spiritualism, some to Theosophy or occult science generally. They are a mere handful compared with any complete bibliography of either subject.

enable us to appreciate both the value and limitations of spiritualism. The mediumship on which it relies is better understood now than at first. Physical phenomena are brought about when certain invisible factors in the medium's constitution can be withdrawn for use by elemental agency. Messages come through when certain organs in the medium's body respond to subtle vibrations that most people fail to perceive. But the medium in either case is a passive instrument in the hands of invisible operators, and these are of all varieties. That accounts for the nonsense that often discredits the method. The lower regions of the next world swarm with the (morally and intellectually) lower classes of humanity dying constantly by thousands, and (for a time at all events) remaining as unintelligent as they were in life. Their influences and messages are ignoble and stupid, but even then they serve their purpose. They show us in touch with another plane of existence. And meanwhile more enlightened inhabitants of that plane also communicate as the literature of spiritualism shows.

But spiritualism, having broken down the deadly materialism into which thought was drifting during the last century, paved the way for the development of occult science. The later literature referred to above illuminates its origin and progress. The new view of Evolution, of human destiny, and the economy of Nature generally, which it has unfolded for us, cannot be fully interpreted within the limits of a Review article, but may be broadly suggested.

The stupendous conception of the future which shows that physical life has spiritual progress for its purpose, that this world is the region in which that progress has to be accomplished, that other realms of existence are the regions in which the work done here bears fruit, and provides for invigorating rest, leads us to the important conception that each physical life is

merely one of a series; that whatever experiences intervene between each we shall all of us come back again and again to life of the kind we are familiar with here, that Reincarnation is as certain a law of Nature as the circulation of the blood.

Reincarnation when first scientifically defined some thirty-odd years ago was quickly seen to solve many previously insoluble problems. The hideous inequalities of human condition no longer seemed to insult Divine justice. Suffering became intelligible when the conditions of each new life were realized as the consequences of previous " doing " (or Karma). The superficial objection, that the sufferer did not remember his former misdoing, was dissipated as we realized that the Higher Self did so, and profited by each physical plane experience. Further knowledge showed that humanity is still in its youth. A few more advanced than the multitude *do* remember former lives. The whole course of reasoning need not be repeated here. The appreciation of rebirth as essential to a comprehension of human life is already widely spread. By reason of misunderstanding details many people regard it with dislike, and the dislike has been accentuated by the eagerness of those who seized upon it at first to deal with it as though it covered all mysteries of the future. To think of the future as simply a return to this life is as great a blunder as to think of the life which opens up to the person just set free from the physical body, by *its* death, as entering an everlasting existence of a superphysical order. Only by failing to understand it correctly can anyone fall into the habit of criticizing the Divine scheme of evolution unfavourably. The personality of a brutal criminal in the slums is clearly not fit for eternal perpetuation. The bishop in his palace, if he honestly considers the matter, will come to the same conclusion as regards himself. " We are

ancients of the Earth," etc., and, as we look back on those who millions of years ago were more ancient still, we can see how better worth perpetuation we shall be when wider experiences of life shall have lifted us as far beyond our present condition as we now are beyond that of our Stone Age predecessors—ourselves in former lives. Probably, indeed, there will be no stage of growth from which the perpetuation of that stage would be conceivable. Spiritual progress must be infinite, but with that which lies beyond the perfection of humanity we can only be concerned much later on. Our present purpose should be to understand the laws of reincarnation so as to realize that it does not conflict in any way with the wide-ranging possibilities of life on higher realms after bodily death, and to understand *that* life so as to realize that it does not interfere with the necessity of returning here to gather fresh experience and get ready for loftier spiritual enlightenment on happier levels again. Those of us who have taken adequate advantage of modern opportunities need not speculate about the chances of survival after death. That is utterly familiar knowledge, and, with varying facilities, many of us are in communication with friends who have passed on, though it does not always happen that these have acquired any scientific comprehension of their own destinies beyond the stage actually reached. Even for those of us here who have taken best advantage of current opportunities there are horizons beyond which our knowledge does not extend, but the region in which people wake up after they have discarded the physical vehicle of consciousness is already a *pays de connaissance* for many of us, and there is pathos as well as absurdity in the fact that, for much larger numbers, conventional teaching has left them still in doubt whether there is any waking up at all.

"The Astral Plane" is the term generally used by occultists to designate the vast realm of unseen life immediately surrounding this globe. It is not a well-chosen term, as the region in question has nothing to do with the stars, but it has become rooted in occult phraseology, and we cannot now escape from its use. It is really a vast concentric sphere of matter that does not appeal to our physical senses; far greater in size than the physical globe it embraces, including an enormous variety of conditions, some of them highly disagreeable; but of these it is needless to speak for the moment, as the vast majority of decently behaved people will have nothing to do with them but will pass at once, when free of the body, to regions where they will find themselves happier than they are likely to have ever been, even under favourable circumstances, in the physical life. Naturally the character of such happiness is determined by the use that has been made of the earth life and the extent of spiritual development that the Soul (or Ego) has reached in its long progress through the ages, its innumerable immersions in physical life, its former incarnations. The distribution of the varied conditions is well understood by those among us whose faculties are equal to the task of cognizing astral conditions, but for people who are not merely without such faculties, but have not been in touch with those who do enjoy them, some explanation is needed in reference to matter and sense-perception.

Without plunging into metaphysics in the direction of Berkeley it is obvious that the reality of matter for us is due to the appeal it makes to our senses. Even on this plane some kinds of matter—most gases—make no appeal to the sense of sight, but we know of them by means of other senses, other avenues to consciousness. But most of us have no senses through which astral matter can affect our conscious-

ness. Many, however, have, and that is the whole secret of " clairvoyance " the actuality of which as a faculty in some people is no longer the subject of any sane denial. Clairvoyants can in some cases *see* the forms in which astral life is expressed. For the most part their astral senses are partially smothered by their association with physical senses. Those, however, who can—as the phrase goes—get out of the body, and exist prematurely in the astral plane, in the vehicle of consciousness that will not be in perfect order for use until the physical body, at death, is finally got rid of, such persons become at once fully conscious of the astral realm, and—this is the important point to realize—cease for the time to be conscious of the physical realm. It does not exist for them any more than the astral world exists for the commonplace man in the street. All this is not guesswork or metaphysical speculation. It is the definite result of observation as scientific in its character as that concerned with astronomy or spectroscopic analysis. And the final result is that we are now in a position to know that when we look up into the sky and see nothing between us and the stars, we are really looking through a realm as rich in detail as the landscape we can see on a fine day from a mountain top. This region is inhabited by myriads of the human family, amongst them any we have loved and lost and will rejoin in due time, pending, at a far remoter date, our return together to this laborious nether world in which we have to work for any grand results above that may crown our ultimate endeavours.

The astral world is not merely a concentric sphere surrounding the physical globe, it is—one within another—a series of concentric spheres, generally spoken of by occult scientists as " sub-planes." Counting from below upwards, the first and second,

actually immersed in the body of the earth, are regions of suffering with which none but the very worst offenders against Divine laws have anything to do. The third sub-plane, above the earth's surface, is still a comfortless region in which people who have been too deeply absorbed by the lower interests of physical life may have to spend a period of purification before ascending to happier levels; but this vast and highly varied range of experience may be ignored for the moment as it need not disturb the apprehensions either of people who lead fairly wholesome lives while incarnated, or of the large numbers of gallant victims of the War who, on passing over, find the normal consequences of minor shortcomings obliterated by the sacrifice they have made of their earth lives in a noble cause. They, and the fairly well behaved majority, will slip through the third sub-level without finding themselves entangled in it, and awake to consciousness on the fourth level of the astral world, the circumstances of which are almost infinitely varied but on which, however varied, happiness is the underlying principle of all sensation and experience.

Obviously the conditions that make for happiness will be very different for people who, however creditable in a humble way their earth lives may have been, do not represent advanced intellectual development. The great man of science, for example, and the simplest maid-servant may share one characteristic. Both may regard some other human beings with genuine love. Their happiness on the fourth level will involve reunion with such persons if these have passed on first, ultimate reunion in either case; and if they have to wait for this there will be partial reunion meanwhile, for the Egos of people in physical life are, especially during sleep, in closer touch with the astral plane than they realize in the normal

waking state. But the highly advanced Egos, the great men of science and others, have capacities for the enjoyment of other astral opportunities over and above those relating to personal affections. On higher levels of the astral, to which such capacities would be automatically the passport, magnificent opportunities for the expansion of knowledge, along the lines already laid down in physical life, would open out. And for such Egos centuries of glorious intellectual achievement are provided by the opportunities of the higher astral levels. They will all come back to incarnation eventually, for no matter how great they may be, measured by our present standards they are merely on the way towards the summit possibilities of human evolution; but there is no hurry, and as a matter of fact all the great scientists, poets, and artists of the last three hundred years or more are still on the higher levels of the astral world, even though they may have access to still higher realms, and may avail themselves of that privilege from time to time. The higher astral levels, for intricate reasons, are especially adapted for the expansion of such knowledge and capacity as they generally desire.

Those lofty levels share some characteristics with the fourth level but are less earth-like in their superficial aspect. The conditions of the lower fourth—for the sub-planes include much variety—are curiously earth-like. Life there is free from all the tiresome lower needs we are troubled with, but people live there in houses, enjoy beautiful scenery and social intercourse, although the delightful principles that prevail there sort them, so to speak, into congenial groups, besides respecting the individual attachments of a genuine character passed on from the love experiences of the earth life. The progress upward towards sublime spiritual heights ultimately attain-

able by all human beings, is a gradual progress just as the acorn becomes the oak by degrees, not between to-day and to-morrow. If anyone is discontented with this explanation because he thinks of a beloved daughter (for instance) as turned into an angel of light, the day after her death, and in touch with the throne of omniscience, he has failed to appreciate the magnificence of the scale on which human perfection is gradually developed. Some of us may already be exquisite in goodness, as we measure character, some of us already splendid in intellectual grandeur, but infinitude is a long story. Eternity cannot be hustled. The achievement of the modern occultist has to do with the illumination of the relatively immediate future.

And some details of that fascinating period are already within the range of our comprehension. Astral matter is plastic to the creative power of thought. With a vivid imagination here we can mentally almost visualize objects we might desire to possess. On the astral plane under similar conditions, the things desired—appropriate clothing, for example, pictures, furniture, houses even—would assume objective reality, and even durability when many creative thoughts co-operate. But as familiarity with the delightful freedom from body necessities that the astral life confers enables people gradually to realize that they do not need houses, furniture, and so on, those cease to make their appearance on the higher levels, where scenes of natural beauty provide for all the wants of inhabitants incapable of fatigue, hunger, or thirst, unconscious of either heat or cold. They may be fully conscious, none the less, of the intellectual interests they have been concerned with in physical life, and may continue in touch with the progress of art or discovery down here, in a way it is hardly possible to describe in a few words.

This outline sketch of the astral life could, indeed, be filled in with much further detail and even be supplemented with some description of planes or spheres higher and beyond the astral. But in attempting to explore these, incarnate human intelligence is up against conditions that defy the resources of language. For every Ego, indeed, each experience of astral life must come to an end sooner or later, though it may extend to many centuries of our time, and must almost always culminate in some touch with the lofty plane beyond; but for the humbler, less developed entities this touch would hardly involve consciousness, would merely be the prelude to an unconscious plunge back into incarnation. The better understanding of that plunge by the great many people in the present day who recognize the necessity of reincarnation as a principle, but dislike the idea for want of comprehending its method, is supremely desirable.

The law applies to all, but is so elastic as to fit in with very different volumes of circumstance. First we must remember that Egos ripe for reincarnation represent very different stages of development. The humblest of these, leaving out quite savage races that we need not think about for the moment, is not a very expanded being when, after a long stay on the astral, he has shed all memories of his last life and remains its spiritual nucleus. The law, guided by Divine agency, puts that spiritual nucleus in touch with a new birth, and there is not much consciousness left on higher planes to be thought of as the Higher Self of the new personality. But in the case of the highly developed entity astral experience, instead of obliterating unimportant memories, has enormously expanded those that are important. The Ego as it stands ready for reincarnation is a being on the Astral Plane of immense complication, built up by the experience of many lives in the past, by that of many

intervening astral episodes. He is probably something much more than can be fully expressed in its next immersion in physical matter. He will remain, all through the earth life to come, the Higher Self of the visible entity, of which the visible entity in its physical brain will have but little consciousness. But, by the hypothesis, enough of the real complete being will be expressed on the physical plane to make the new incarnation greater than ever along the lines of its former growth. If a great scientist before, a greater scientist again. If a great poet, a greater, and so on. But the point to be emphasized for the moment is that, while the new body is growing, the actual great intellectual being destined to use it at maturity is doing little more than looking on from above. If that idea can once be properly grasped, it does away with the fear some people seem to feel, to the effect that *they* with their present volume of consciousness will have to go through babyhood and all the experiences of the nursery when they come back to earth life. During all that time *they* will simply be looking on from above. To understand fully how it will come to pass that the baby and the young child will in a certain sense be conscious also, is very difficult for most of us, but, however faintly, that is what has to be realized. There is so little of the real Ego in the new child up to seven years of age that, if it dies within that time, the trace of consciousness it has been expressing simply reverts to the Higher Self, who makes another attempt a little later on and begins to animate a new form, not infrequently in the same family as the first. The mother's pretty belief that a later child is her first baby restored to her is often the outcome of a literal scientific truth.

If all goes well the first seven years of the new child's life is spent in the growth of certain invisible accessories of the body, which medical science will

sooner or later be concerned with investigating. And, again, the next seven years are spent in further developments of the same order, but by the time the boy or girl is fourteen a good deal of the real entity is beginning to express itself. Not the whole by any means, nor even the whole of that part designed for expression in the new life. But now the old astral is beginning to be wanted no more. In the new life the Ego is forming for itself a new astral. The Higher Self remaining in touch with lofty planes will, for any expression it may need on the astral plane, make use of the new astral. Of course all these changes fade one into another like dissolving views. Nature is rarely addicted to abrupt metamorphoses.

*Mutatis mutandis*, the process of incarnation as described above with reference to a well-developed Ego is applicable also to people at intervening stages of growth. The return to physical life is never attended by inconveniently premature consciousness in the new body. Or this broad rule is only in rare cases partially infringed. Here and there, for example, young children have been known to show musical talent at a ridiculously early age. In such cases the Ego of the great musician in the background is so eager to express itself on the physical plane that it cannot wait till the new instrument is properly tuned for the task. But even Mozarts who play the piano at six are not all there. Their condition is so exceptional that it need not be minutely examined in connection with any sweeping survey of the laws governing reincarnation.

But one essential principle must never be forgotten. Guided by supreme wisdom and power, each new incarnation is conditioned by the merit or demerit of the Ego returning to physical life. Students of heredity generally make the mistake of supposing that ancestral attributes are the cause of characteristics

reproduced in the descendant. The descendant has been planted in that family because bodily heredity would there provide it with a physical vehicle qualified to give expression to its own inner nature. And, beyond this, because the circumstances of that life's programme fit in with the requirements of absolute justice as regards the claims of the Ego for happiness or its deserts as regards trouble. The infinite skill of the Divine Power regulating the details of each rebirth blends the intellectual or artistic necessities of the Ego with a worldly environment appropriate to its moral condition, its good or bad "Karma," as the case may be. The working of this law is intensely interesting and marvellously intricate. The consequences of good or bad action in one life partly reflect themselves, to begin the explanation, in happiness or the reverse during the astral life. But that is only the first part of the story. A fundamental law, equivalent, on higher levels of nature, to the conservation of energy in mechanics, asserts itself with every entity coming back to incarnation in the earth life. Moral action, good or bad, must bear consequences from life to life. The external conditions, the happiness or the reverse of each life are the expression of forces set in activity during the previous life, or sometimes going back behind that, during previous lives. And, again, though they cannot controvert that law, aspirations in any given life, when sustained and intense, are an important factor in generating the environment of the next. To work with the simplest example, a person in a humble rank of life may be wishing all the time that he or she belonged to a superior class. The longing would have no effect if it were too vague. A carpenter thinking he would like to be a king does not know enough about the kingly life to long for it with precision. But he knows a good deal about the con-

ditions of social life just a little above his own. He may or may not long for these, according to the measure of his contentment in his own station, but if he does long for them he does so with precision, with exact comprehension of what he wants, and then such longing becomes a natural force tending to colour his next incarnation. And the principle really operates so widely as to bring about a gradual upward drift in social station of the innumerable Egos emerging from the humble levels of existence. Of course that is merely a broad rule subject to frequent exceptions. Sometimes the Karma of a life spent on high levels may necessitate a plunge to lower, but normally the aspirations of our life do contribute to engender the environment of the next.

Thus in thinking of future Life and lives we have to recognize the two-fold character of the consequence ensuing from the manner in which each life is spent. That definitely affects both the immediate future and the ultimate future; more specifically it colours life on the astral plane after the death of one body, and determines the welfare or suffering of the next incarnation. For people who have led fairly creditable lives the astral period is happy and restful, often associated with opportunities of doing useful work. Even when the previous life has been faulty in some respects, it may be that such misdoing has been of a kind so exclusively identified with physical life that it can only give rise to consequences on this plane again in the next earth life. But when the misdirection of activity has been of a kind that deeply colours the surviving consciousness of the Ego, it may entangle him, when first passing on, in the third level of the astral world. That is a region of varied discomfort in which people have to realize the nature of their misdoing and shed the desires that have given rise to it. In bad cases that are not of the

supremely bad order, the purification may be rather a slow process, but assuming that the character of the person going through it is tainted merely—not predominantly evil—the ultimate passage to the happy levels already (very imperfectly) described is assured, not merely in the long run, but very likely in a short one.

In awfully serious cases the course of astral life is very different. There is one variety of human wickedness that is altogether in a different category from those that are mere vices. The sinful character of these—the mere vices—is often exaggerated; but cruelty, that worst and horrible form of cruelty which takes actual pleasure in the infliction of and sight of pain and suffering in others, is an attribute that drives the authors of such hideous misdoing down into that appalling submerged level of the astral world with which most of those even in need of purification have nothing whatever to do. Even that region must be thought of as purgatorial. Its fearful experiences may at last cure or begin the cure of the most ghastly offenders against the Divine law of love (of which cruelty is the exact reverse). But imagination shrinks from the attempt to realize the details of the sufferings incidental to existence on the terrible submerged level. Their duration, in the worst cases, may be counted in centuries of our time. In others, a brief experience of this character may give rise to the needful revulsion of feeling. But though it would be unwise to attempt a survey of the astral world without taking cognizance of its lower depths, it would be worse than unwise to refer to them in any way that could excite fear on the part of harmless, innocent people, too prone, as a consequence of clumsy religious teaching, to imagine themselves " miserable sinners." Talk of that kind is for the most part silly nonsense, culminating in something much worse when associated

with ghastly imaginings concerning eternal sufferings in hell. No decorous language is equal to the emergency in dealing with the criminal folly of those who terrify children and insult God by describing burning tortures to be inflicted for ever on hapless victims of Providential atrocities. Nature does provide a penitential reformatory for souls of diabolical criminality, but even there reformation is the purpose in view. It need only be thought of as completing the broad conception of after-death conditions that modern research in spiritual science enables us to form. For the poor innocent "miserable sinners" of the churches, the view we are now in a position to obtain of happy life on the higher levels of the astral world is that with which they are personally concerned. But that view even is in need of amplification. The *merely* happy restful life to which people of ordinarily good life may confidently look forward is not the only possibility that the astral world holds out. To understand the design of the future correctly, we must realize first of all that the whole scheme of evolution provides for a gradual progress, through many earth lives and many episodes on higher planes, towards a condition enormously superior to that yet attained by the most advanced representatives of current civilization on earth. By most of the human family such conditions will ultimately be attained after periods of time that are bewildering to the imagination. But when the distant possibilities of human evolution are fairly well comprehended in advance, in the light of such teaching as occult research (and modern revelation) enables us now to deal with, we see that it is possible for those who appreciate the opportunities available to make a much more rapid progress than is provided for by the natural drift of events in reference to the multitude. Some members of the human family have been able to accomplish this long ages ago, and already

stand on levels of progress on which they become agents of Divine purpose in promoting the spiritual growth of mankind. These are referred to in occult literature as the Masters of Wisdom, and they are always ready to help forward the abnormal progress of people who have acquired some comprehension of their place in Nature, and are filled with eagerness to get on as rapidly as possible in the direction of those great heights. The earth life is the opportunity for beginning such efforts. In this supremely important aspect of the subject, as in minor matters, the earth life is the period for sowing all spiritual seed. The astral life is the period in which it begins to bear fruit. A perfectly commonplace earth life, however harmless and innocent, bears appropriate fruit in the astral world in the shape of happiness and rest. An aspiration during earth life towards real spiritual growth, coloured by such knowledge as is now available for all, bears fruit in the shape of personal touch with those Masters of Wisdom who may guide the aspirant to incarnations in which he may accomplish results the dignity and grandeur of which cannot easily be exaggerated. Something beyond mere personal happiness is then seen to be the object of attainment. This world is the expression of Divine Will: it is governed by Divine Law, but it is, so to speak, managed in detail by the agents of Divine Will evolved from the scheme itself. To become a part of, to be identified with that sublime agency, is the goal aimed at by those who fully realize the true meaning of spiritual growth. That such a condition involves a species of exalted beatitude which is something greater than and beyond personal happiness is a thought that may fairly be associated with true spiritual aspiration, but one that does not cover the whole idea, too subtle perhaps for clear definition in language, though some trace of it should always colour

for advanced thinkers, all reference to the changes inaugurated by each physical death. When the grave swallows any particular vehicle of consciousness that we have done with, it certainly marks an important stage of our progress through the infinitudes of life, and represents a very tiresome circumstance connected with this early period of human evolution; but only while we are suffering from the sad imperfections of conventional teaching is the grave surrounded with terror.

The purpose of this article has not been merely to dissipate that terror, but to elucidate, for those who may long since have ceased to feel it, the detailed circumstances of the passage to the life beyond; and above all, to show how the all-important principle of reincarnation does not in any way conflict with natural aspirations for spiritual existence after bodily death. Reincarnation is no hurried process. There is plenty of time in Eternity. Does anyone imagine that a thousand years of spiritual life after the fatigues of this one will not be enough for him? If he continues hereafter to entertain that view, then he will have more. Or if he has no such far-reaching aspiration, and finds himself content with the simple enjoyment of the astral life on its less exalted levels, he will fall asleep and drift back to physical life in obedience to natural law at the appropriate time And both in his case and in that of his more advanced contemporaries, the return to physical life will be accomplished as easily as the processes of sleep and waking during physical life, with the inner mechanism of which, for that matter, most people are no better acquainted than with the method of rebirth, the fullest acquaintance with which carries with it the most complete acquiescence in the wisdom, beauty, and harmony of the whole design.

# RELIGION UNDER REPAIR

On the 14th of April, 1917, *The Times* published an article entitled "Sheep without a Shepherd," which, gently and without bitterness but in unequivocal terms, described the conventional religion of the Churches and all their creeds as hopelessly out of date. Thinking men and women were represented as convinced that religion must be rediscovered from the beginning. The clergyman and his religion "belong to a dead past." Thinking people "turn away from the Churches more and more as their interest in religion grows." What they need is "a conception of the Universe in which they may take their place." They believe in Christianity but they need an expression of it that will satisfy intelligence. "The time of cleansing for the Christian theology has been delayed so long that there is a danger lest the mass of men should think it all litter and dust of the past." The Churches have fancied that the danger would be staved off "by the slow, reluctant relinquishing of this or that belief as it became impossible." The real need is for discovery and growth. The Church "must not be content any longer to talk pious nonsense in the hope that it will seem sense because it is pious."

One might have supposed that so sweeping an indictment as this, directed against vested interests firmly rooted in social life, would have provoked a storm of criticism and a flood of sympathetic reiteration. Has orthodoxy preferred silence as on the whole safer than defence that would provoke

fresh attack? If so, the fear is misdirected, because it is based on a misunderstanding of the attack. The clergyman accused of talking pious nonsense thinks the accuser an atheist denying God. The accuser is simply indignant with the clergyman for caricaturing God. There would still be a place for that clergyman among us if he could be taught to reverence God wisely. Has that attitude of wise reverence been attained by any of the earnest thinkers discontented with the clergyman's teaching? Has discovery really anticipated the demand for it set forth in the article quoted? Are there answers available for people who " ask real questions about the nature of the Universe," and may there not be already a considerable number of others who have profited during the last thirty years from wide publicity given to super-physical knowledge at one time reserved for a peculiarly qualified few?

The true answer to that last question is in the affirmative, and those who have been concerned during recent years with the assimilation of ideas reflected in the Higher Occultism believe themselves, at all events, in possession of definite knowedge which meets the intellectual craving represented by *The Times* article. Many books convey this to all who care to read, and describe the sources from which it is derived. For some of us who are students of occult science and philosophy the authors of the teaching given out are seen to have extraordinary claims on our trust. The nature of these claims can better be appreciated after we have fairly considered the general outline of the teaching they convey. It constitutes a complete response to the demand set forth in *The Times* article. It does give us a comprehensive view of the Cosmos to which we belong. It embodies a revelation which is, for the world at large, a "discovery," of previously unsuspected truth

concerning the fundamental facts of spiritual silence underlying all forms of religion. It does much more than this because it gives us a perfectly clear view of the course of human evolution, dissipating all the darkness that surrounds death; lighting up the conditions of the new life that immediately follows the change and pointing out the path to be ultimately trodden, leading to infinitudes of progress. The view of Divinity, Life and Nature thus afforded—conveniently to be described as the Higher Occultism—makes its first claim on respectful consideration by its own inherent reasonableness. It is vast in its scope, widely ramifying in all directions, but perfectly coherent, scientifically harmonious; all parts of the whole mutually supporting each other. In one way, that is a difficulty for the beginner approaching the study of the Higher Occultism. The comprehension of—not necessarily the whole because the whole is an infinitude—but of a great volume of super-physical knowledge is essential to an adequate appreciation of its parts separately. But eventually when enough is grasped, conviction sets in as an intellectual necessity, and then, among other conclusions, the honest student realizes that the Higher Occultism has been a gift to the world from Teachers who are obviously entitled to profound trust. But his perception of this is no longer needed as a guarantee of the teaching. It embodies its own confirmation.

Perhaps this can only be fully appreciated after a more exhaustive study of super-physical science than can be provided for within the limits of a Review article; but a mere outline sketch of the knowledge accumulating on our hands will go far towards justifying the claim made above. Indeed, the most elaborate attempt to deal with detail would still leave us gazing at remote horizons beyond which human vision cannot penetrate, but that is by itself a con-

dition which tends to fortify belief in what can be seen. No theory which invested Eternity with a beginning and an end could be otherwise than absurd. But while the idea of God, Divinity, the Divine principle—whatever phrase we prefer—expands into regions beyond the reach of understanding, we do find that in so far as this world is concerned—in so far, indeed, as the Solar System is concerned—Occultism presents us with an intelligible conception of the Divine Hierarchy; also, as already affirmed, clearly illuminating the mysteries of human origin and destiny, the course and conditions of evolution, and the manner in which Divine justice can be reconciled with the terrible irregularities of life in the physical world. It puts us in a position of intimate familiarity with the life on super-physical worlds surrounding our globe to which all pass after the change described as death. It enlarges our view of human destiny, to that extent that we see life on other planets linked with that of the Earth; and the whole Solar System resolves itself into a definite Divine enterprise, with an origin and purpose vaguely appreciable, though in touch with mysteries of infinitude and eternity which we need not, at this stage of our progress, attempt to fathom. Incidentally occult science forecasts the future progress in various directions of physical science, and in some cases those forecasts, made ten or fifteen years ago, have already been overtaken by practical research. The proof of that last statement would involve a long digression, but is definitely available, as many of the conclusions arising from the discovery of radium were clearly set forth in a book entitled *Occult Chemistry* published many years before Madame Curie's luminous contribution to plain physical science. Indeed laboratory research has as yet only partly overtaken the occult discoveries though confirming them as far as it has gone.

The claims for occult science just set forth may be examined one by one. It does not shrink from the use of the word "God" except in so far as the word has been degraded by ignoble creeds. But Supreme Divinity is necessarily infinite and must have reference to manifestations in millions of worlds besides our own. And yet we feel sure that Divine Consciousness permeates this world. Occult teaching assures us that our own individual consciousness is a Divine emanation, though limited in its scope and range of power by the vehicle or sheath in which it is working—for the moment. The idea is susceptible of expansion. All consciousness is a Divine emanation—that working in animal forms—in vegetable forms even—also that working in super-human forms on planes or realms of Nature loftier than the physical. The idea at once leads to an appreciation of the sublime magnificence of the Divine Hierarchy intervening between our humanity and the nearest manifestation of the infinite Divinity. Reasonable occultists do not presume to formulate a rigid conception of that nearest manifestation, but they know that the Solar System is a definite enterprise within the manifested Universe and therefore that in some way it can be identified with a vortex, so to speak, in infinite Divinity, and that is generally referred to as the Logos of the Solar System. Words are not well adapted to such thoughts, but we must be content to use the best we have got. The simple Christian who wants to discern a Father in God may be chilled by this awfully super-physical idea, but he need not be so if he clings to his faith in Christ which the occultist has no wish to disturb. Medieval creeds which the Churches perpetuate have caricatured the Christ idea, amongst others, but the occultist clearly understands Christ as belonging to the Divine Hierarchy, in close touch with this world, and that understanding carries with it a reverential

feeling that no conventional Christian can possibly improve upon. Of course the Hierarchy of Beings representing various stages of spiritual evolution and a vast variety of functions in Nature include sublime entities on all imaginable levels, but the fundamental all-important idea to be held firmly in thinking of the hierarchy is that it constitutes the Agency through which the Divine purpose is worked out in manifestation. This is one way in which a scientific complexion is put upon occult religion. Agency runs down to the minutest activities of Nature. There is no break in the uniformity of the method. Archangelic Beings fulfil the Divine purpose on their levels. Elemental beings on levels of consciousness *below* our comprehension are agents in promoting the growth of plants, or carrying out the laws (the Divine purposes) of chemical affinity. This last thought relates to a huge branch of occult science in a borderland that physical research must soon invade.

A hierarchy that includes Beings of the Archangelic order (and also others of still loftier spiritual rank) together with humbler agencies below the level of humanity, concerned with the working of natural law, must obviously also include beings but relatively little above the human level. And this thought illuminated by definite information brings the occultist into touch with a realm of knowledge bearing equally on the government of this world and the possibilities of human evolution. There is a level of the great hierarchy definitely recruited from humanity. Common conceptions of human evolution have correctly hit off the idea that it is recruited itself from lower forms of life. Prevailing belief, however, has not grasped the notion that it expands into higher forms without any break of continuity. At an earlier period in the world's history this was more generally appreciated than it has been in recent years. In

ancient Egypt, for example—though the five or six thousand years beyond which modern research does not extend were a mere decadent remainder as compared with still earlier Egyptian civilizations—the people generally knew that some few hierophants had risen to a high condition of knowledge and power as compared with ordinary humanity. Definite systems of initiation were known to lead upward towards those heights. Though later generations have lost sight of this deeply significant truth, it is still as true as ever. The (relatively) lower levels of the Divine Hierarchy are still recruited in that way. For recent ages the system has been veiled from common obs rvation. The progress of humanity is worked out in accordance with a definite Divine plan. For a time it was necessary that intelligence should be trained in the study of physical nature. The improvement of brain capacity was the task before the incarnate vanguard of humanity. Super-physical knowledge, the fascination of which would have attracted the pioneers of brain culture off the path designed for them, was hidden away for a time. Those men of science who resent the movements of thought bringing it to the light of day again are survivals of the regime to which they have not yet ceased to belong —unconsciously bearing testimony, amusing to the occultist, to the accuracy of his diagnosis.

The principle just hinted at—that human evolution does not stop short at the stage reached by the most brilliant representatives of current civilization—leads on to the appreciation of the idea that infinitude is applicable to that evolution, as to the loftier conception of Divine nature. The idea is best understood by tracing it back to some extent into the past. Consciousness—which eludes research in the dissecting room—is, in a certain sense, uniform in its nature; incomprehensible as regards its essence, but

vaguely acceptable as somehow of Divine origin. As above pointed out, its scope and range are determined by the vehicle or sheath in which it is involved. The full development of that idea puts a new face upon the whole theory of evolution. In any animal form we like to think of, consciousness has obviously a very limited scope compared with our own. The splendid light Darwin threw on Nature showed us the growth of form, following certain physical plane impulses. The occultist at first only found fault with the theory as ignoring the simultaneous evolution of consciousness. A clearer view has since been obtained. In the lower animal forms consciousness has not been individualized. But an aggregate volume of consciousness animating many lower forms gradually feels the need of animating higher ones. Fully developed, the description of the process would be very protracted. Eventually in the highest animal forms consciousness is individualized and passes under well-understood conditions into the human form, not at once into one of high development. By this time, however, the individualized consciousness may be treated as an Ego subject to the law of reincarnation. At first its progress may be thought of as the growth of the Ego —its spiritual growth going on concurrently with the improvement in the human form and the perfection of the brain. But how is this view to be reconciled with the theory that consciousness is identical in essence throughout Nature? Quite easily, for all who profit by what is known concerning the laws governing reincarnation. Desire is one of them. Desire for an improved form providing improved scope for consciousness would be distinctly operative. But the man at a humble level does not know enough to formulate such a desire explicitly. He does it automatically by making the best use of the form—

or vehicle—he has got. Natural law then gives him a better one in his next life and so on *ad infinitum*.

The principle properly understood accounts for lofty as well as humble progress in evolution. The man in the beginning does not know what he wants, but gets it by unconsciously conforming to the law. On a higher level he obeys it consciously, and the result is the same. On all levels, of course short of those that are very exalted, action good or bad—Karma, to use the technical expression, good or bad—hastens or retards the result, and a mere recognition of the laws concerning reincarnation and Karma goes far to explain and justify the conditions of the world as we find it—with all its ghastly irregularities of physical and moral welfare. That is a huge branch of occult study by itself. But in tracing the manner in which humanity is linked with the Divine Hierarchy the occult interpretation of the minor mysteries of current life on Earth may be left aside for the moment.

A profoundly significant phrase, borrowed, I believe, from some Oriental scripture, runs as follows: "Whatever is, is, has been, or will be Human." Those few words cover the whole sweep of thought concerning the origin and destinies of Man, the meaning of creation, the essence of all religion. Such thought, of course, melts into the incomprehensible if pushed backward or forward into the infinitudes of Eternity, but is magnificently full of suggestion. That it accounts for all lower forms of life and the earlier conditions of this world is relatively uninteresting. It accounts for the Divine Hierarchy. That upward growth that we can trace from lower to higher forms of human life is nowhere arrested. Occult science has shown us from the first that living forms are not built merely of physical matter. During this familiar earth-life, even fairly advanced representatives of humanity are capable of passing from time to time

into vehicles of consciousness built of finer orders of matter than those which build up flesh and blood. The full development of that subject would claim a long dissertation, but for the moment the important point is that, though physical humanity is an essential phase through which differentiated consciousness passes, a time comes when physical form is needed no more, and progress goes on without any break in the process towards conditions of being that, contemplated in imagination from the physical plane level, seem to represent different orders of creation. Beings on that level are simply among the members of the Divine Hierarchy referred to by the words " has been " in the phrase quoted above.

But that does not mean that they have been simply human at any period in the history of this planet. From the point of view of occult science no world is a complete undertaking in itself. Life, the infusion of Divine consciousness into matter, is a vast coherent phenomenon in Nature, limitless in all directions. The idea may be approached by considering its bearing on the Solar System, itself, as we are enabled now to realize, a coherent scheme of manifestation, all its parts inter-related one with another, and as a whole inter-related with a larger Cosmos.

Common astronomy deals with the magnitudes, distances, and movements of the various planets constituting the Solar System, and to some extent with their relative stages of development. Jupiter, for example, is obviously a world in an early stage of its growth, because it is still hot—almost incandescent. Occult astronomy—which might be called Vital Astronomy—deals with the life going on in each planet, or for which each is in preparation. In most cases each planet is part of an (apparently) independent scheme of evolution. Thus the planet Venus belongs

to a senior scheme as compared with that which the Earth represents. Human life there has already been carried to stages of growth enormously in advance of the stage yet reached here. But there, as here, individual growth has been affected by the play of individual Free Will (which presents no mystery to the occultist), and, though a very large majority of the original human population of the Venus scheme have attained to highly exalted conditions, some have dropped off in the course of bygone ages, the Egos having failed to attain conditions qualifying them to reincarnate among the more advanced majority. Their destiny is intensely interesting, as illuminating the economy of the Solar System as a whole. There is no final perdition for the failures of each planetary scheme in turn. They *pass on to the next scheme!* The failures of the Senior Venus scheme are merged in the humanity of the Earth scheme. The further details of this process are of increasing interest. The failures concerned, though left behind by the successful candidates for progress on Venus, fell off from their proper human family at a later stage than that generally reached so far by the foremost races, even, of the Earth scheme. So the present conditions of Earth humanity do not yet afford them appropriate incarnation. Nature deals with the difficulty in her usual competent fashion, but to make the solution intelligible the conditions of our own planetary scheme must be taken into account. In our case three planets are linked together in one comprehensive evolution. Of course, the reason of this is intelligible, but that would be a long story by itself and may be left aside for the moment. Our human family is at present distributed over three worlds—Mars, the Earth, and Mercury. Silly criticism based on ignorance may fall foul of this statement on the ground that Mercury—so near the Sun—must be too

hot for human life. Too hot certainly for bodies of our flesh and blood, but the chemistry of Nature can solve more intricate problems than those merely of temperature. Mercury bodies are adapted to temperatures in which our own could not exist.

Now the main body of our human family is here on the Earth, but an inferior remnant at a very low and coarse stage of development—the dregs of our humanity, so to speak—is still on Mars. A vanguard of peculiarly advanced Egos is already on Mercury, leading a more beautiful life than any of which the Earth's main body has yet had experience. That advanced vanguard supplies the Venus failures with suitable opportunities for incarnation, and the bulk of the Mercury population at the present time had to begin with a Venus origin. Of course, the numbers are not great compared with those of the Earth—taking those to include Egos in and out of incarnation—in physical bodies, that is to say, and on the higher spheres surrounding the physical planet.

The importance of the explanation just given turns on the way it shows the whole Solar System as a coherent organism, for obviously the system now operative as between the senior evolution of Venus and the next in order—our own—will go on providing for the evolution, at remote periods in the future, of the outer planets, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune. Circumstances will no doubt vary in these far-off regions of the stupendous Divine programme, but the leading idea establishes the unity within diversity of the plan that the Solar System represents.

This light though comprehensive sketch of the Divine plan will enable the reader incidentally to understand how the students of occult or Vital Astronomy obtain their information, obviously of a kind that no commonplace physical faculties can

possibly deal with. We see human evolutions extending upward, without any break of continuity, to the nearest levels of the Divine Hierarchy. We realize the unbroken continuity of consciousness beyond those levels, so that knowledge of the kind that seems at the first glance to belong to Divinity itself must filter down to the lower levels of the Divine Hierarchy. Then we begin to understand how the Beings on those levels—in touch in one direction with relatively Infinite Wisdom, in the other with ordinary humanity—may see fit to pass on to some qualified pupils in ordinary humanity some information illuminating the world and the Cosmos to which that ordinary humanity belongs. Indeed, it is obvious that sooner or later such information *must* be passed on, to provide for the fulfilment of the Divine Plan. At earlier stages of growth humanity was not in need of all this lofty teaching. It had to accomplish certain achievements—now, from the higher point of view, essential preliminary undertakings. Humanity had to learn simple broad principles of moral science, to grapple with the vague idea that there was some Divine mystery pervading the world. The religions of various periods met this need with more or less success. It did not much matter at first that they were irrational in their design. In days of one early papacy, for example, when priests disputed as to whether Christ was the *real* son, or an *adopted* son, of God, religious intelligence was not ripe for more suitable discussion concerning the Divine Hierarchy. The writer of the article on "Sheep without a Shepherd" seems to think the Clergy of the present day are not much more ready for it. However this may be, some of them must be ready, and outside the Church a sufficient number have been found ready, to justify the full flow of the teaching which this paper partly embodies. Then,

again, for the last thousand years or so, humanity has been getting ready for higher teaching by perfecting its thinking capacity. The study of physical science has polished human brains to a high degree of delicacy. That had to be done before religion could be levelled up. Habits of scientific thinking have certainly paved the way for appreciating the credibility of occult teaching, better than the mental training of the theologian plodding in the path of medieval creeds. A considerable number of people thus prepared are ripe for superior enlightenment—more than ripe: definitely craving for it. It has become incumbent on the custodians of the superior knowledge to give out that knowledge far more freely than was necessary or desirable in the past. Only as we become possessed of the knowledge can we appreciate the obligation. The further growth of humanity towards higher conditions of being can only be accomplished by a humanity comprehending its purpose and potential destinies. That level of the Divine Hierarchy nearest to and immediately above ordinary humanity has to watch over, guide, and promote the spiritual growth of that ordinary humanity. As those ready for new conditions become more and more numerous, the work of those who link humanity with the hierarchy becomes more and more important and exacting. The occult student generally refers to those who are the links in question as the Masters of Wisdom. The title will serve for the moment, though we may eventually adopt a better. Whatever name we use, they are the immediate agents of Divinity in carrying out the design in which this world and its inhabitants play a part, and, as time goes on, and they have more and more to do in a world ripening by degrees, their numbers must be recruited. That can only be done as the more advanced claimants for spiritual

enlightenment are mentally and morally cultivated. The evolution of a humanity, in fact, is analogous to that of a single entity. In childhood his growth, well-being and education depend on others. Teaching gradually enables him to realize that his own will and effort must be brought into play to accomplish growth beyond a certain stage. His later development must depend upon himself. So with humanity at large. The evolutionary law works under loftier guidance for a time; but the race cannot improve beyond a certain stage without understanding its place in Nature, without realizing the sublime truth that it must for its later development guide its own evolution, govern itself.

We are now at an important turning-point in the World's history, even as the situation might be considered without reference to the enormously significant fact that the super-physical Powers of Good and Evil are engaged in the fiercest struggle for supremacy that has ever been waged in the whole history of the Solar System. The issue of that struggle is not in doubt. Beyond the horrors of the final crisis there stretches the assured vision of a beautiful future, but its beauty will be partly due to the continual expansion of the knowledge which has been gradually pouring into our hands during the last thirty-odd years, the ever-growing appreciation of which is no less certain than the ultimate defeat of the Satanic power hitherto directed, among other purposes, to stifle and impede its dissemination. That defeat accomplished, the World's progress along desirable paths will proceed with a rapidity for which no previous experience has prepared us, and the influence of that comprehensive view of Nature and Divine truth that has hitherto been "occult"—veiled or partially obscured—will permeate religious thinking and soon lead to a reconstruction even of the

orthodox clerical presentation thereof, so that there will no longer be any inclination to regard that as "litter and dust of the past." The unseen laws governing the world and human evolution, the conscious agencies through which they are administered, the higher realms of life intimately associated with the physical life on the Earth's surface, will all come within the range of human understanding in a near future and will bring about such a blend between science and religion, that each will be regarded as the complement of the other—the piety of the Church no longer nonsense in the sight of Science, and the critical insight of Science no longer a terror for a Church which will lean on it for support.

# RELIGION UNDER REPAIR: A REPLY TO PROFESSOR LINDSAY

ENDEAVOURING to frame a crushing "rejoinder" to my attempt to show that conventional religion is badly in need of repair, Professor Lindsay, writing in the *Nineteenth Century*, provided his readers with so fair a summary of its contents that he is entitled to my thanks for bringing these afresh to the notice of any among them who may have overlooked their first presentation. But in failing to appreciate their importance he shows clearly how minds untrained in the study of Nature's superphysical mysteries are embarrassed with prepossessions partly derived from medieval theology and partly from materialistic habits of thought prevalent in the last century. Current thinking meanwhile has been deeply coloured by the recognition of some capacities of human consciousness that transcend the physical senses. There are still many amongst us who resent subtle discoveries outrunning their own experience. What they can't understand they refuse to believe, and must be left in the rear of mental progress. But for those who do not protect their opinions by carefully guarding their ignorance, some broad convictions, at all events, are gathering strength.

Foremost among these is the certainty that there are avenues to perception over and above those provided by the physical senses. If anyone now denies the possibility of clairvoyance, he does not express an opinion; he merely shows himself unacquainted with certain developments of scientific research. Again, while crowds of blatant assailants abuse the multitudes

who *know* that they have touch with conditions of human life following on the change called death, disbelief in that matter where it exists is merely due to ignorance of the work done in that department of research. Those who challenge either of the statements just made are not entitled to attack a writer who takes them for granted. The literature dealing with them is abundant. No one addressing intelligent hearers concerning any fresh development of superphysical research can be fairly called on to waste his time in going afresh over the rudimentary discoveries of fifty years ago. A modern chemist, writing about the atomic weight of thorium-lead, does not include in his essay an elaborate argument to show that the measurement of atomic weight is possible.

The stream of criticism Professor Lindsay directs against my exposition of lately expanded teaching concerning human and super-human evolution may be partly summed up in the question "How do you know?" expressed in various phrases, few of which offend good taste in their form. But the answer is embodied in the various books I have written in the last thirty-odd years, and I do not want to go over all that ground again. I will summarize it briefly, recognizing this as by far the most important question that can be put by anyone meeting with the later results of occult research before having grown familiar with the earlier achievements of that great undertaking. But in the first instance I am tempted to deal with some amusing objections levelled by the Professor against various "assumptions" I have ventured to put forward as in no need of elaborate proof.

My remark that occult research anticipated many of the "conclusions arising from the discovery of radium" is twisted into a statement that it anticipated the discovery of radium, and treated with sarcasm

accordingly. The fact, as I stated it, is simply indisputable to anyone who will take the trouble to read the book I referred to, *Occult Chemistry*, and observe the date of its publication. It is obviously impossible to repeat the contents of that book here. It will be found deeply significant for all persons interested in chemical science.

Pantheism! There is some resemblance between the true doctrine and the speculation going by that name, just as there is some resemblance between metempsychosis and reincarnation, but also all the difference that there is between a lump of gold-bearing quartz and a finished gold coin. Spinoza's pantheism absorbed God in Nature and left no God behind. Occult pantheism recognizes Nature as an emanation of God, but also recognizes the infinite, supreme, Divine incomprehensible Being of omnipotent consciousness which *is* God, as losing nothing by its infusion into matter. Thus occult pantheism includes Deism while clearing that conception of its limitations. It is true that almost all the finished mental products of modern occult research have been crudely anticipated in a great many early philosophies and scriptures. The splendour of their modern presentation is due to the extraction of the interior truth from the rough ore—its re-statement in terms of Western scientific thinking. That is the answer to the objection that my "theory is as old as Gnosticism," and to the somewhat inane charge that "my pretensions to unfold a new and satisfying cosmic world-view are simply ridiculous." That which is ridiculous is the suggestion that in its present form—with modern scientific precision and detail—it can be found either in Gnostic writings, or even in Sanscrit Upanishads—with which by the way our Professor may not be intimately acquainted as he refers vaguely to "Hindoo philosophy." That phrase might be

paralleled by a Hindoo who should refer to "the European language" as though there were only one. It may be in a certain sense true that "there is nothing new under the Sun," but as time goes on old ideas get sometimes so embellished by advancing knowledge that they seem the product of a new revelation. That is emphatically true of the cosmology developed now by students of what—for want of any better term—I have called the Higher Occultism.

Reincarnation! Our Professor thinks it "has never found favour in the West." I think it is commanding the assent of all intelligent people—whenever it is understood. Unhappily it is very widely misunderstood—as by our Professor, obviously, when he describes it as a paralyzing doctrine of which fatalism is the natural outcome. The natural outcome is exactly the reverse, because it shows each life in turn the expression of causes set in motion by the free-will of the Ego in former lives. Again, complete explanation of the real doctrine would claim very many of these pages. That doctrine is fairly set forth in my own published writings, but I do not feel entitled to advertise them here. If anyone thinks, along necessitarian lines, that acts in each life are inevitable, and therefore, as causes, encouraging fatalism, the answer is, firstly, a contradiction of the assumption arising from our knowledge of the way Karma is adjusted by the Elemental agents of the Lipika! I use technical phraseology for the moment, to hint that in dealing with the Higher Occultism I am skirting the confines of an elaborate science. The words used above will have a definite meaning for every Theosophical student, and will, I venture to think, be quite destitute of meaning for the Professor. Secondly, the reason why incarnation provides for intellectual moral and spiritual growth and expansion is to be discerned in the fact, so ill-understood by the

materialistic science of the last century, that Thought is a force. Again, that is a statement that people ignorant of all that has been done in psychic research during the last quarter of the last century will not understand, and, therefore, will foolishly deny. The influence of thought on future incarnations has been elaborately traced in my own and other current books. In truth it determines their course. And, when understood, reincarnation becomes not only acceptable but the only thinkable method of carrying on human evolution. Some people are frightened of it, because they foolishly imagine that it means their own individuality and consciousness immersed in a baby form, and miserable in such a condition. Their consciousness during the baby period will be on a higher plane in another vehicle. They will not enter their new bodies till these are mature far beyond the stage of the nursery. How can I convey a glimmer of the truth in a few words? The spiritual entity of an advanced representative of a highly civilized race may be older than this world. His or her incarnate personality, in any given case, may be only a partial incarnation. There is a Higher Self, the part of the whole self, on a spiritual plane all the while. Clairvoyants, adequately endowed, can *see* the law at work. Mesmeric practice will often enable one to get touch through a personality with his or her Higher Self, and thus not merely verify its existence but acquire voluminous information concerning the conditions of the super-physical realms of consciousness belonging to this world. These become so familiar to the qualified occult investigator, that current discussions as to whether they do really exist or not are more ludicrous in his sight than the outsider who never concerns himself with such inquiries can easily imagine. And students of occultism will be even more amused by the Professor's criticism to the effect

that their studies throw "no light on the problems of life and consciousness." Their literature is saturated with ethical teaching of an exalted order, which bears on every imaginable problem of life and consciousness. Some Theosophical writers, indeed, are so dominated by the thought that nothing matters except the cultivation of the loftiest moral virtues, that they are less interested in the knowledge concerning the previously hidden mysteries of Nature which it has been my special business to unveil as far as possible. To say that the Higher Occultism, which embraces or includes Theosophy, does not concern itself with moral problems, would be like saying that the branch of science called Physics does not concern itself with electrical phenomena.

So now let me turn to the supremely important question Professor Lindsay puts impressively—with reference to a statement I made about Venus and Mercury—"How does he know?" Quite unconsciously he answers his own question when, intending to be satirical, he says: "Mr. Sinnett would appear to have sources of information not generally available." Precisely so. I first came into touch with those sources of information in the year 1879, and a year or two later wrote a book, *The Occult World*, fully detailing the circumstances under which I obtained that touch, and some of the intellectual results that ensued from it. That touch has been maintained to the present day, and it is hugely important that the consequent authenticity of Theosophical and Occult teaching should be properly appreciated. Explanation of the reasons which led many of us to trust them in the beginning, and of experiences confirming that trust in later years, is thus due not so much to any casual critic exhibiting hostile incredulity, as to the ever-increasing multitudes who are sympathetically attracted to occult teaching on

its own inherent merits. Already the Theosophical Society, which does not by any means exhaustively comprehend the vast movement of Theosophical thought, numbers—according to last year's general report—989 distinct branches or "Lodges" all over the world, with 26,280 members, leaving "enemy countries" out of account. In the interest of these —now constituting the second generation of Theosophical members, for I am almost the only survivor of quite the first generation—as well as in the interest of the far larger numbers who will assuredly appreciate Theosophical teaching as time goes on, it is supremely desirable that the actuality and nature of that "Occult World" described (very imperfectly) in my first book should be correctly realized. All knowledge on which our welfare depends must be constantly brought up to date. A conviction once definitely and justly established in the mind ought never to fade, but for many people such convictions require to be refreshed from time to time. So, in reply to an inquiry, which on its own merits alone need not perhaps have claimed very earnest treatment, but may have a dull, wide echo if undealt with, I shall venture to explain once more "how I know" and what are my sources of information.

The great developments, as far as they concerned myself, began in 1879, and, though the Professor thinks that Mme. Blavatsky and the Mahatmas are a little *démodé*, the events of that period paved the way for supremely important results. As anyone who will read my first book will see, Mme. Blavatsky exercised abnormal powers. It is futile to suggest that later on she was accused of practising imposture. These accusations related to events occurring long after I left India. They are scorned by the multitudes who still reverence her memory, but it is not my business to deal with them. The record of her

magical doings which I put forward has never been challenged. Nor can it be challenged except on the hypothesis that I am not telling the truth. If things occurred under the circumstances I describe, no possible theory can be framed to account for them except the theory that she exercised power over forces of nature as yet unknown to science, producing effects that were a defiance of conventional beliefs relating to the natural laws governing matter. No critics of my story accuse me of intentional falsehood. They would be laughed at by the large number who know me if they did. They may accuse me of having been deceived, but that accusation falls to the ground for all who read my records, because, if things happened as I describe them, there was no room for deception. That position could only be established afresh by a tedious recapitulation of definite occurrences, and it is useless for critics to assail it unless they will refer to the original statements and show how, under the circumstances, there was room for imposture. For the moment I must be content to repeat that such showing is impossible. I was far more deeply interested at the time than anyone can be now, in eliminating from the experiments I made all possibility of fraud.

Anyhow the result was that I came to *know* that Mme. Blavatsky exercised, or was the agent through whom were exercised, super-normal powers. That made me inclined to listen to her statement as to how such powers were obtained. The statement was to the effect that they were a relatively feeble reflection of mightier powers and wider knowledge possessed by certain men whom she had personally known—members of a great Brotherhood representing a higher stage of human evolution than had been attained by the foremost even of those representing the progress of scientific knowledge in the open world at large.

This statement, though striking and impressive, did not seem to me incredible. Why should human perfectibility after crossing such gulfs as those which separate our greatest exponents of intellectual evolution—Faraday, Newton, Copernicus, Pythagoras, etc., etc.—from the man in the street (not to speak of the savage), why should it stop short at the stage represented by the names quoted? Nor was any mental difficulty involved in the idea that still loftier stages had to do with knowledge—and powers ensuing from it—that could not desirably be diffused through the world at large in its present stage of development. That is obvious, and it accounted for the reserve and seclusion of the advanced "Masters of Wisdom," or, to use the favourite Eastern term, "the Mahatmas." When I began to write about them, shallow-minded readers fastened on a story which lent itself to derision, while more intelligent listeners in large numbers began to think seriously of "Theosophy," the comprehensive term assigned to the new views of natural philosophy opening out before us.

Satisfied myself (to go back to the beginning) that the exponents of the higher knowledge must exist, I was eager to get into touch with them—and succeeded. First a protracted correspondence began. How did letters pass between myself and unknown correspondents, in Himalayan seclusion? By that time I *knew* (see *The Occult World*) that occult power could transport physical objects through space. I found that the "Master" could "take" my letters by means unfamiliar to the post, could give me the answers in strange and unexpected ways. But the "wonder" of this grew gradually subordinate to the importance of the communications themselves. Moreover, it was eclipsed by personal experiences of a super-normal character that put me in closer touch with the Occult World than that established by the

correspondence. I am now merely sketching the course of events. To describe them in detail would mean re-writing some of my books, but the sketch will, at any rate, suggest the nature of those "sources of information" which are within my reach, though "not generally available." And a moment's reflection will show how reasonable it is to believe that the "Masters" (to use the Western equivalent for the Indian word Mahatma) are able, if willing, to give such information concerning the other planets of the Solar System and its general design as that which I made use of in my former article[1] for the *Nineteenth Century*, and in many books. Common knowledge here amongst us relating to the capacities of our own clairvoyants (though there are people claiming to be cultured who remain absolutely ignorant of them) shows us the way in which senses finer than the familiar five will reveal what is going on at great physical distances. Developed by Masters of super-physical science is it surprising that they should reach out to other worlds of our system?

Again, amongst us everyone following the progress of modern psychic research will know that it is possible for the consciousness (Soul, Ego, call it what you like) to pass out of the physical body for a time during life, to bid a conscious good-bye to the physical body left asleep, and roam the spaces of the "astral" world immediately around us, bringing back recollection of such excursions when resuming the use of the physical body. And during such excursions it may be possible, for those permitted, to have speech with Masters, as well as with lesser human entities who have gone through the change called death, and thus learn lessons of priceless interest.

[1] See *Nineteenth Century and After*, September 1917, pp. 536, 537.

There are indeed other ways of gathering in such teaching, and these have been to some extent at my service since the far-away days of the beginning that I have been describing, up to the present time. I am now in a position to deal, much more definitely than then, with the functions of the Masters in connection with the government of the world and of the stupendous Divine Hierarchy to which they belong.

Vast numbers among us are ripe now to appreciate this revelation, though other vast numbers are still intellectually cramped by conventional prejudice from which they cannot escape, and it is to those thus ripe that I venture to address what remains to be said, rather than to assailants impatient with the disturbance of their cherished limitations.

The condition described as Mastership can only be attained by the sanction of still higher authority, when the moral and spiritual evolution of the being in question has reached a condition which I have described in an earlier writing as follows:

> When he is in a position to survey the whole process on which the human family is launched, from its beginning in the remote past to its conclusion in the almost immeasurably distant future; when all the natural laws and forces which play round it lie within his comprehension and grasp, whether they are operative on the physical plane with its wonderful complexity of molecules and forces, or on those other planes invisible to ordinary sight which interpenetrate it or surround it and are more bewildering in their complexity still; when all the myriad enigmas of good and evil, of sin and sorrow, and hope, are resolved into intelligible meaning, and neither the earth below, nor the heavens above, nor life, nor death, hold any riddles from his understanding, the Adept is qualified to attain the final rank in the vast concatenation of progress we have been surveying.

Concurrently with the advance in knowledge and power thus suggested, the Master has been correctly described by another writer as necessarily endowed with "perfect compassion, an absolutely selfless devotion to the welfare of all sentient beings, and

a boundless love and fellow-feeling for them all." It has been my privilege in recent years to pick up some bits of information concerning former lives of some among the great Masters, and these have illustrated what the writer just quoted meant by absolute selflessness, in a way that has thrilled me with emotion, though on the higher level self-sacrifice is taken as a matter of course. How, it may be asked, can a being on the Master's level be in a position to incur self-sacrifice? If his body is menaced by injury or destruction, he can quit it at will and assume a new incarnation if he chooses. Undoubtedly; but though he may have been doing that at intervals (very protracted intervals) for a long series of ages, he may sometimes as a definite duty, to fulfil some peculiar purpose, take quite a humble or commonplace incarnation in the ordinary world. He will never in such cases be *known* as a Master in the ordinary world, but he may, for reasons connected with the welfare of other people, choose to remain with them and die, even a painful death in the ordinary way, though he might had he chosen have slipped out of the body without incurring the least inconvenience, or, as Apollonius of Tyana is said to have done when before Domitian, vanish from sight and remove himself from danger by occult means. Nor indeed does the mere exchange of one body for another mean any trouble for the Adept of Master rank. He can keep any one going for periods measured in centuries that dazzle our imagination, but in the course of ages may find it convenient to take new ones from time to time. And this thought alone is one which will help to dissipate the erroneous notion prevalent in the beginning of the Theosophical movement, to the effect that there was something especially Eastern in the higher Adeptship. The Master of Occultism is bound by no limitations of nationality, will be sometimes

in an Eastern as often in a Western incarnation. He belongs to the World! not to any single section of its people, however large that section may be.

The main idea in relation to the Masters that I want to enforce is this: they belong to the Divine Hierarchy that presides over the evolution of mankind, and as regards their work in guiding human progress, as definitely as they are able, are absolutely at one, in thought and intention, with the still higher agents in that sublime hierarchy. They may not always find it possible to steer humanity exactly as they would wish. We, in this life, collectively constitute a craft that often fails to answer to the helm. And, as I endeavoured to explain in a former article entitled "Our Unseen Enemies and Allies,"[1] we are terribly mixed up with inimical agencies bent upon interfering with the Divine purpose at every available opportunity. If it were not for the ceaseless, untiring efforts of our unknown protectors to shield us from the consequences of such attacks, the civilization of the world, the further evolution of the whole human race, indeed, would be utterly wrecked.

For various reasons it is highly desirable that the world should understand this. The services the Masters render us, in harmony with the influence of the whole hierarchy to which they belong, would be rendered just as zealously, however ignorant we might be of the benefits conferred upon us. Divine agents do not work for reward. But if the matter is rightly understood it will be seen that we are the people who would be richly rewarded, if we became cognizant of the benefits conferred, and were, so to speak, grateful accordingly. It is true, indeed, that if such gratitude were widely felt and associated with clear comprehension of the way in which our Elder Brethren, the Unseen Masters, are struggling on super-

[1] See *Nineteenth Century and After*, October, 1915.

physical planes with the Powers of Evil on our behalf, they would in a certain degree be strengthened in the struggle they are carrying on. Success does not depend on such reinforcement of strength; that is certain and assured, but the duration of the struggle, on which the duration of the War depends, might be to some extent affected in the way above described.

Meanwhile the more subtle reward we should secure by gratefully appreciating the protection afforded us has to do with a law of Nature familiar to the occultist, and of growing importance to humanity as evolution proceeds. Spiritual help of the kind affecting the spiritual welfare and progress of each human unit can only be rendered by higher beings in response to aspiration from the level of this life. We must look up, in order that they may look down, in the manner affecting individual progress. The progress of the world collectively will go on, anyhow, when the terrible crisis through which it is passing is over, because some of us will assuredly be looking up, and these in the course of time will drag on the rest. In that way the evolution and progress of the race, as a whole, is provided for, but it will be appreciably accelerated if those who look up, in the way described, become appreciably more numerous than the mere laws of average would ensure. And the acceleration of progress, as regards the upward-lookers themselves, might be more remarkable than they can readily imagine. Not indeed that such a spiritually selfish motive ought to be mainly operative in bringing about the state of feeling that should prevail. From the point of view of the mere occult student on this plane of life, it is disgusting that the great multitude around us should be, so to speak, sopping up the benefits conferred upon them by the Masters collectively and failing even to feel decently thankful. Any Master who may take cognizance of this that

I am writing would, I fancy, laugh at the notion that they could be supposed to want gratitude, but none the less all that I have written above holds good, and anyhow I know that they are eager to help all who are ready to be helped, and therefore are more than pleased when such help is consciously invoked. At earlier stages of the world's growth they had to remain concealed. The stake and the torture chambers of the Church awaited those who tried to proclaim any faith nobler than that of the priests. The Masters had to bide their time. But their time has now come. The world *is* ripe to have its religious thought levelled up to harmonize with the sublime realities of Divine government, and the dangers of allowing spiritual truth to be set free from medieval corruption have at last become negligible.

A good deal in advance of the modern occult development, a book called *A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery*, published fifty years ago, gave out some information about alchemy (the occultism of the Middle Ages) that some devotees of that study at the time thought dangerously frank. The author answers the criticism by anticipation in words which I will leave, in conclusion, as applicable also to such explanations as it has been my privilege to put forward:

> If we have been free in our expositions the spirit was not the more reckless, but because the thresholds of ignorance are already overpast. . . . They are all now incredulous who were formerly dreaded in their belief, and under that safe guardianship we leave them happily supine in the conviction that our conduct will neither be attractive nor intelligible, much less practically useful, to the profane multitude of mankind.

# THE OCCULTISM IN TENNYSON'S POETRY

A FEW among the great host of his devotees who, besides appreciating the varied beauties of Tennyson's poetry, are in touch with modern developments of the Higher Occultism, will be alive to the significance of some hints scattered through his writings showing how he, in advance of modern developments, intuitively divined some important principles now emerging from obscurity into the light. Even highly cultured and appreciative readers, unless also students of occultism, may pass them by unnoticed. Sir Alfred Lyall, for example, in his generally admirable survey of Tennyson's work, contributed to the series of " English Men of Letters," overlooks some glaring hints of the kind in question, while actually dealing with the mere literary charm of one poem mainly devoted to the presentation of occult ideas.

The elucidation of the passages thus hinting at hitherto hidden mysteries of spiritual Nature is the purpose of the present article, but it must not be held to imply that the writer seeks to enrol Tennyson in the ranks of professed occultists. Of course, the splendour of his genius shone chiefly in his treatment of purely human emotion. And we, who have passed through life side by side with the poetic stream of his creation that flowed through the greater part of the last century, have derived our most intense pleasure from the perfection of his earlier verse, apart from the beauty of the thoughts it conveyed. Then came the *Idylls of the King* in their stately magnificence, but they have nothing to do with occultism. A truly great

poet can never be a specialist in any one vein of creation, though in whatever vein he is following, Tennyson seems for the moment to be a specialist in that. *The Lady of Shalott*, *The Day Dream*, *The Lotos-Eaters*, and many others of that period, surpass in their musical charm any previous verse in English literature, though Byron and Moore sometimes touched the same level. And the way in which *Locksley Hall* might be criticized, like *Hamlet*, as "full of quotations," shows how Tennyson was a specialist among poets in coining phrases that linger in universal memory, while the *Idylls of the King* lead some of us to forget that the supreme master of blank verse was equally unrivalled in dealing with rhyme. But after all, however highly we may appreciate his art, that merely renders the surface worthy of the substance of his poetry.

So much in advance to show that the interest some of us may take in the flashes of occult inspiration to be discerned in Tennyson's poems need not separate us from the sympathy of worshippers who live in a more familiar atmosphere. Nor from the point of view of occult students, who have profited by the flood of light let in of late on mysteries previously obscure, will the flashes in question show that Tennyson was completely in possession of knowledge which humbler mortals at the present day are inheriting without an effort. Indeed, innumerable allusions to death and the hereafter in *In Memoriam* are hardly tinged with any philosophy deeper than ordinary religious feeling, and in *The Two Voices* the second voice, which sweeps away the comfortless reasoning of the first, offers merely

> A little hint to solace Woe—
> A hint, a whisper breathing low,

a mere "hidden hope." And yet the same poem contains a passage that might almost be reckoned

among the flashes of inspiration, suggesting the theory of life now reduced to a scientific shape, and gradually winning consent in all directions—the doctrine of Reincarnation:

> I cannot make this matter plain,
> But I would shoot, howe'er in vain,
> A random arrow from the brain.
>
> It may be that no life is found,
> Which only to one engine bound
> Falls off, but cycles always round.
>
> As old mythologies relate,
> Some draught of Lethe might await
> The slipping thro' from state to state.
>
> As here we find in trances, men
> Forget the dream that happens then,
> Until they fall in trance again.

I need not expand the quotation. The poem from which it comes will be familiar to all Tennysonian enthusiasts, and the passage to which I call attention embodies a thought far more fully treated in later utterances; but before dealing with them it is worth while to turn back to one of his very earliest fragments entitled *The Mystic*, written when Tennyson could not have been more than seventeen, and to be found, I think, in one edition of the *Poems by Two Brothers*. It begins:

> Angels have talked with him and shown him thrones,
> Ye knew him not, he was not one of ye,
> Ye scorned him with an undiscerning scorn,
> Ye could not read the marvel in his eye,
> The still serene abstraction he hath felt.

Skipping a great deal to the same general effect, we come to the final lines, which are as follows:

> How could ye know him? Ye were yet within
> The narrower circle: he had well-nigh reached
> The last which with a region of white flame
> Pure without heat into a larger air
> Upburning and an ether of black blue
> Investeth and engirds all other lives.

As far as the form of this poem is concerned we need not trace any of the lines, though some of them are dignified and worthy of the subject, to anything in the nature of verbal inspiration. As the *Memoir* by his son shows us, Tennyson wrote verse when he was only eight years old, and the *Memoir* gives us some fairly long and harmonious examples of his boyhood's work, never published during his life, written when he was fourteen or fifteen. Everyone familiar with the principle of Reincarnation will readily understand that so great a poet as Tennyson must have been a poet already in former lives, and could not but bring over the capacity for poetic expression, so that inspiration, merely conveying an idea, could rely on the new personality to clothe it in appropriate language. Thus, although the ideas underlying *The Mystic* can hardly be regarded as originating in the mind of a boy of seventeen, the words conveying them may have been entirely his own.

The description of *The Mystic* is not appropriate to any one on the ordinary plane of life to whom that term might apply. Writers on the philosophical system generally called "Mysticism" are "Mystics" in one sense, but may not have any characteristics resembling those described in the poem. Those are the characteristics which—with others—belong to the highly evolved "Elder Brethren" of the human race —now generally spoken of as the Masters of Wisdom, of whom—since they themselves have communicated more freely than in former times with the ordinary plane of life—we have come to know a good deal. That they inspire many modern writers with ideas for them to work up in the progress of literature, art, and science is now clearly realized by their pupils in occultism. Conventional thinking has hitherto made at once too much and too little of inspiration. It has been conceived as only of very rare occurrence

in connection with writings of a sacred character, its frequency being thus very limited, while its source is thought of as altogether Divine. It is really of constant occurrence and emanates from all levels of the Divine Hierarchy. The extent to which writers and artists (those with some lofty purpose in their work) are "helped" by invisible beings, on a higher plane of life than their own, can hardly be exaggerated, so there is indeed little reason to be surprised at finding a youthful poet of Tennyson's promise under inspiration from a very early period.

But the world was not ripe in the year 1826 for the gift of any detailed information concerning the actual constitution of the Divine Hierarchy, with its varied levels of dignity and power and intricate agencies. In 1892, towards the close of the great poet's life, conditions had changed in a very remarkable degree. And the flashes of inspiration to which Tennyson lent himself then became wonderfully distinct. A few verses to be found in the volume published in that year, and entitled *By an Evolutionist*, are deeply suggestive. We read as follows:

> The Lord let the house of a brute to the soul of a man,
> And the man said "Am I your debtor?"
> And the Lord—"Not yet: but make it as clean as you can,
> And then I will let you a better."

Occult students will recognize in these few lines a flood of significant allusion. The words alone may have no deep meaning for readers unfamiliar with the great principles hinted at, but for those who know more they are richly significant. They include, to begin with, the fundamental idea that humanity is evolved from humbler animal life, and beyond this they recognize the method of that evolution—the transfer of Consciousness from Lower to Higher Vehicles as the consequence of its own craving for the higher. They recognize more than that indeed—

a deep and supremely important idea concerning the nature of consciousness. This is one of the latest developments of advanced occult teaching. Consciousness—that supreme mystery that baffles all physiological research—is uniform in its character throughout all manifestations of life. There is only one kind of consciousness: that of human beings and of the animal creation is the same throughout. Its effective value depends on the vehicle in which it is working. In the body of an animal it is subject to extreme limitations. In the body of a man it has greatly expanded capacities. In the vehicles of consciousness belonging to higher planes it finds these capacities again expanded to an extent which ordinary humanity, at the average stage reached in this world at the present time, cannot even grasp in imagination. At every stage of the process the same law works. Any given volume of consciousness within any given vehicle, gradually becoming an individuality, establishes a claim on Nature for an improved vehicle, by making the best possible use of the one it has got. "Make it as clean as you can, and then I will let you a better."

We can understand the law best by concentrating attention on humanity at first. The man at an early stage of his progress cannot ascend to great heights of achievement. He may be fit for little more than the rougher manual work of physical life. But being by that time a man, he has—if only a glimmering—perception of the difference between right and wrong. He follows the guidance of this perception. He makes the vehicle of his consciousness (which *is* himself) "as clean as he can." In his next incarnation he infallibly acquires "a better." Thus the verse above quoted, among other ideas, clearly recognizes the principle of Reincarnation, which Tennyson evidently accepted without reserve and worked with continually.

In the *Memoir of Alfred, Lord Tennyson* by his son we are told that he left a Note to Section xliii. of *In Memoriam*, which runs as follows:

> If the immediate life after death be only sleep, and the spirit between this life and the next should be folded like a flower in a night slumber, then the remembrance of the last night remains as the smell and colour do in the sleeping flower, and in that case the memory of our love would last as true and would live pure and whole within the spirit of my friend until after it was unfolded at the breaking of the morn when the sleep was over.

In writing this Tennyson was evidently concentrating thought on the idea of rebirth and the recovery of the love-relations of the previous life. Even if the intervening period were merely a sleep the true Ego would reappear in the awakening life. The more scientific view of reincarnation, of course—while confidently recognizing that idea—realizes the immense importance of the intervening life on higher planes. Sometimes, indeed, if the Ego is at a humble stage of its expansion, the intervening period, though restful and happy, is little better than a blissful sleep. In others it affords magnificent opportunities for the cultivation of intellectual or artistic capacity. True, such growth can only take place as a consequence of some effective seed of aspiration or effort sown in the previous physical life, but even minute seeds of that nature are nuclei from which splendid consequences may ensue, without in any way interfering with the revival of old loves and even minor friendships dating back to the past. The disregard of this important aspect of the subject operates to render the idea of reincarnation unattractive to people who understand it imperfectly. They think of themselves beginning a new life all alone as it were. This is a ridiculous misapprehension of the natural law. A moment's thought should show that probability points to the idea that generations living about the same

time will—on the average—get through their intervening lives on higher planes, and be ready for reincarnation at about the same time later on. Where personal ties of love or even less powerful affinities associate Egos together, their return together becomes a matter of certainty. Adequately trained clairvoyance is equal to the task of verifying that principle, and tracing back, even through ages in the past, the former lives of living people.

Whenever genuine mutual affection unites people on this plane of life, they are always found to have been in affectionate relationship in former lives also. There may have been considerable differences in intellectual growth even, but the love-tie is supreme, and the ingenuity of the natural law—or of those who guide the natural law—is equal to the emergency in such cases, and to much more complicated problems of "Karma"—the convenient term which embraces, among other meanings, the necessity that moral causes engendered in one life shall reap their appropriate consequences in lives of later date.

Now let us turn to the last verse of the brief poem, of which the first has been quoted above:

> I have climb'd to the snows of Age, and I gaze at a field in the Past,
> Where I sank with the body at times in the sloughs of a low desire,
> But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the Man is quiet at last
> As he stands on the heights of his life with a glimpse of a height that is higher.

The last few words of the last line—"a glimpse of a height that is higher"—hint unmistakably at the sublime possibilities of Initiation. There is no finality in the vast process of human evolution, but there are recognizable stages. The perfect Man has reached one of these stages, from which he looks forward to spiritual attainment transcending any condition that can be limited by the term humanity.

I need not attempt to elaborate that idea; but we shall see reason to believe that the poet knew more of the height that is higher than he found it possible to put into words.

The law under which Divine consciousness in humanity seeks and secures better and better vehicles operates also throughout the lower kingdoms. It is not easily traced through animal and vegetable manifestations, but even faintly understood it illuminates the whole doctrine of Evolution. Occult students at one time were inclined to find fault with the Darwinian presentation of the idea, as ignoring the evolution of consciousness going on concurrently with the evolution of form. We see now that the evolution of form defines the evolution of consciousness. Consciousness is very far from being a mere attribute of the form, as some materialistic scientists of the last century imagined, but the expression of its infinite capacities depends on the form in which it is working. This view of the subject is worthy of protracted treatment; but there are other poems that claim examination.

A little fragment—merely two verses—entitled *The Making of Man*, is well worth attention, but does not do more than reiterate some of the ideas in the verses last discussed. It recognizes the nature of the tiger and the ape as necessarily manifesting in humanity at first, but

> Prophet-eyes may catch a glory slowly gaining on the shade,
> Till the peoples all are one and all their voices blend in choric
> Hallelujah to the Maker—"It is finished. Man is made."

We may now turn to the poem which is the fullest expression of occult inspiration among all that suggest that origin—*The Ancient Sage*. This, indeed, includes evidence showing that Tennyson in his own consciousness had attained to definite knowledge

relating to spiritual conditions far transcending those familiar to the average humanity of our period. *The Ancient Sage* was published in the volume entitled "Tiresias and other Poems," just preceding the latest of all—"Demeter and other Poems." The "Sage," obviously a Master of Wisdom, criticises a "scroll" by a young companion who has embodied sceptical, almost materialistic, views in very graceful verse. The scroll recognizes that "the earth is fair in hue,"

> But man to-day is fancy's fool
> As man hath ever been.
> The nameless Power, or Powers, that rule
> Were never heard or seen.

The Master comments on this:

> If thou wouldst hear the Nameless, and wilt dive
> Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,
> There, brooding by the central altar, thou
> Mayst haply learn the Nameless hath a voice,
> By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise.

The scroll still quarrels with the mystery.

> And since—from when this earth began—
> The Nameless never came
> Among us, never spake with man,
> And never named the Name.

And the Sage answers with almost the best passage in the whole poem:

> Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son,
> Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest in,
> Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,
> Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit alone,
> Nor canst thou prove that thou art both in one:
> Thou canst not prove thou art immortal, no,
> Nor yet that thou art mortal—nay my son,
> Thou canst not prove that I, who speak with thee,
> Am not thyself in converse with thyself,
> For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
> Nor yet disproven: wherefore thou be wise,
> Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
> And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith!

After a passage in the scroll relating to the darkness and miseries of life, the Sage replies:

> Who knows but that the darkness is in man ?
> The doors of Night may be the gates of Light;
> For wert thou born or blind or deaf, and then
> Suddenly heal'd, how wouldst thou glory in all
> The splendours and the voices of the world !

And this leads up to the most striking passage in the poem, in which the Sage—in this case Tennyson himself—got "out of the body," to use a phrase familiar to occult students, by adopting a method with which they are quite familiar. This consists of self-induced hypnotism brought on by repeating—alone and aloud—one's own name. The repetitions may have to be very numerous, running perhaps into hundreds, and even then the effort may be futile unless the person making it has some psychic potentialities in his nature. But granting that last condition, it is an effective process, and one which Tennyson seems to have been almost in the habit of using. His reference to it in the poem before us is as follows:

> for more than once when I
> Sat all alone, revolving in myself
> The word that is the symbol of myself,
> The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
> And past into the Nameless, as a cloud
> Melts into Heaven. I touched my limbs, the limbs
> Were strange not mine—and yet no shade of doubt,
> But utter clearness, and thro' loss of Self
> The gain of such large life as match'd with ours
> Were Sun to spark—unshadowable in words,
> Themselves but shadows of a shadow world.

I cannot identify any other allusion in the whole range of Tennyson's poetry that directly relates to experiences of this nature, but in the *Memoir* his Son tells us that

> in some phases of thought and feeling his idealism tended more decidedly to mysticism. He wrote: "A kind of waking trance

I have frequently had quite up from boyhood when I have been all alone. This has generally come upon me through repeating my own name two or three times to myself silently, till all at once, as it were out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being, and this not a confused state but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, the weirdest of the weirdest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction but the only true life! This might be said to be the state which St. Paul describes, 'Whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell!'" He continued: "I am ashamed of my feeble description. Have I not said the state is utterly beyond words? But in a moment when I come back to my normal state of 'sanity' I am ready to fight for *mein liebes Ich* and hold that it will last for aeons of aeons." In the same way he said that there might be a more intimate communion than we could dream of between the living and the dead, at all events for a time.

So the spiritualists may fairly claim Tennysonian sanction for the fundamental principle of their belief, which indeed is quite in harmony with the views of advanced occult students, though some of early date were misled into a needlessly hostile mistrust of the system, apt in some cases to be itself rather misleading, but which—as broadly designed to assure a world drifting at one time into materialism that there is another life after this, and so on—was a generous gift to civilization from levels of higher wisdom.

Readers of the *Memoir* will derive, from a very unexpected source, confirmation of the fact that Tennyson made frequent use of the repeated-name method of attaining spiritual illumination. It appears that the author asked Professor Tyndall to make some contribution to the work in hand. In the course of a long answer he says:

I looked up the account of my first visit to Farringford, and there to my profound astonishment I found described that experience of your father's which, in the mouth of the Ancient

Sage, was made the ground of an important argument against materialism and in favour of personal immortality eight-and-twenty years afterwards. . . . If you turn to your father's account of the wonderful state of consciousness super-induced by thinking of his own name and compare it with the argument of the Ancient Sage you will see that they refer to one and the same phenomenon.

The injunctions which the Sage ultimately gives to his pupil, described in the beginning as

> one that loved, and honour'd him, and yet
> Was no disciple, richly garb'd, but worn
> From wasteful living . . .

sweep over the whole range of occult ethics. I pick out a few lines from a passage too long to quote *in extenso*:

> Let be thy wail and help thy fellow men,
> And make thy gold thy vassal not thy king,
> And send the day into the darken'd heart;
> Nor list for guerdon in the voice of men,
> . . . . . .
> Nor roll thy viands on a luscious tongue,
> Nor drown thyself with flies in honied wine;
> Nor thou be rageful, like a handled bee,
> And lose thy life by usage of thy sting;
> Nor harm an adder thro' the lust for harm,
> Nor make a snail's horn shrink for wantonness;
> And more—think well! Do-well will follow thought.

Each injunction will be familiar to readers of theosophical books, and *a fortiori* to all students of the Higher Occultism, and that last phrase, "Do-well will follow thought," is an almost amusing reflection of a more elaborate doctrine set forth in certain manuals that profess to guide candidates for initiation in the higher mysteries. They are told *first* to purify thought, and *secondly* to purify conduct. From the commonplace point of view that seems putting the cart before the horse, but action may sometimes be thoughtless, and then if it were avoided for no definite

reason it would probably be repeated for no definite reason. If purified thought preceded its avoidance, the cure would be permanent.

It is needless to carry on further the search for occult allusions in Tennyson's poetry. Fainter hints, in the order of those already quoted, might be pointed out in poems less definitely infused with occult inspiration than *The Ancient Sage*, but the broad conclusion to be derived from them all is sufficiently well established. The deeper mysteries of life and nature were still veiled from general knowledge during the greater part of Tennyson's splendid literary activity. It was not his task to tear down the veil completely, nor did the rifts he made in it here and there afford his readers anything resembling that scientific comprehension of great natural truths lying behind it which many of us have ultimately reached. This attainment inaugurates a new era of thought. But Tennyson intuitively forecast the revelation impending. And perhaps for the cultured classes of this period, slow hitherto to appreciate the significance of the Higher Occultism, the fact that its development was so clearly foreshadowed in the writings of a man so universally reverenced as Tennyson, may guide modern sympathies into regions of thought which they might never have explored but for that august leadership.

## CREEDS MORE OR LESS CREDIBLE

SINCE the amusing period when Bishop Colenso discovered that the hare does not chew the cud—as the author of the Pentateuch had supposed—the "Allegory," on the banks of the Nile and elsewhere, has been busy chewing the primitive faith of good people previously content to accept statements in the Bible as necessarily true, even when somewhat surprising. Tempers were often lost during the discussions of the Colenso and Darwin days, but Allegory has proved a more good-humoured beast than he was thought to be at first, so that critics and the Church can give and take now with a superficial pretence of being friends in reality. Beyond this, indeed, the attitudes of mind on both sides are undergoing change. The ribald scoffer is extinct. The D.D. who still attributes the sufferings of the world to Eve's conversation with the Serpent hides quietly in cathedral towns. Science and Theology are on the terms that Talleyrand described as established between himself and the Host, when he raised his hat to a Roman Catholic procession: "Nous nous saluons mais nous ne parlons pas." And happily these relations are still improving. Science, of the old materialistic order, has had to endure many shocks of late. A police magistrate some years ago refused to believe overwhelming testimony in favour of a spiritualist medium on the ground that it was contrary to the known laws of Nature. The members of the Royal Society are no longer so sure of having completely catalogued those laws. And the doubt makes them

even respectful to the theory of miracles. After all, turning water into wine is child's play compared with the miracle accomplished whenever artificial incubation turns an egg into a chicken. People who still disbelieve in the phenomena of genuine spiritualism—as puzzling as any records in Christian story—must guard their ignorance very carefully if they wish to preserve their opinions. Science in all directions is negotiating with the unseen, and the wise churchman realizes that some concessions on his part may lead to a settled peace, promising protection for institutions and substantial interests he sometimes felt to be in danger from the battering ram. Already there is an *entente* more or less *cordiale* between the enlightened Free Thinker—shedding the folly of denying whatever he does not understand—and the churchman who knows that he must adapt his faith to the uniformities of Nature, that it is often unsafe to insist that "sacred" writings always mean what they seem to say.

But questions have arisen that are more embarrassing than the reconciliation of Scripture with obvious physical facts. And these challenge statements that cannot take sanctuary in any theory of Divine inspiration. The language of the Creeds must at all events be ascribed to human authorship. This is complicated and to some extent obscure, but in criticizing the Creeds we are not in trouble with any theory of verbal inspiration from Divine levels. The Revised Version of the Bible—humbly attempting to correct a few gross errors of translation—has (according to a familiar anecdote) been treated with faint praise by a sturdy exponent of the early faith who preferred "God's own words." But the words adopted to define Christian belief at Nicæa in A.D. 325 were simply those of certain bishops, who prevailed over other bishops desirous of using different words,

so we cannot well bring inspiration into the story. Again, the Nicene Creed was preceded by an extensive "creed literature"—to use the phrase of an orthodox writer, though it would be scarcely possible now to identify any writing as the first attempt to put Christian belief on paper. Nor does the importance of the subject at the present time turn upon its historical aspect. The question arising is this: Do the Creeds, as they are put into the mouths of people who attend church at the present day, express beliefs they can possibly be expected to entertain? The question may fairly be described as having arisen, because it has been recently the subject of correspondence in *The Times*. Canon Glazebrook in a book called *The Faith of a Modern Churchman* says that the clauses in the Apostles' Creed—"Born of the Virgin Mary" and "The third day He rose again from the dead"—can legitimately be interpreted "symbolically." The Bishop of Ely, in a letter addressed to Canon Glazebrook and also published in *The Times*, refuses to accept this view, and supports his refusal by quoting a resolution adopted by "the bishops of the whole Anglican Communion assembled at the Lambeth Conference in 1908," which runs as follows: "The Conference in view of tendencies widely shown in writings of the present day hereby places on record its conviction that the historical facts stated in the Creeds are an essential part of the faith of the Church." Canon Glazebrook, in a long letter published in *The Times* of May 21, does not argue the question on its merits but quotes episcopal sayings that deprecate undue limitations on freedom of thought and inquiry, and attributes to the Bishop of Oxford a view of the Ascension which he summarizes in this way: "Our Lord could not, for astronomical reasons of which the disciples were ignorant ,physically ascend into Heaven. But in order give to them a

right conception of His change of state He rose to a moderate height in the air, and then so veiled Himself behind a cloud that they believed Him to have gone right up into the vault of the sky." If the Bishop is fairly represented by this summary the suggestion needs expansion. What was the later course of events? When our Lord, having deluded His disciples in the manner described, wanted to come down again, how did He conceal His reappearance? But while the Bishop's hypothesis tempts further comment, this might seem wanting in due reverence for the main idea concerned, so no more on that subject need be said for the moment.

And yet that line of speculation in reference to alleged occurrences that outrage common sense, is one into which it is easy to be driven if people are content to think of Nature as simply consisting of that which appeals to the five senses, even though the whole may be vaguely regarded as bathed in spiritual conditions intangible as Thought, out of relation with Space or Time, offering nothing to the imagination that can prefigure a future existence, except of a kind to be spoken of with bated breath and avoided as long as possible. Only for those, happily a large and increasing number, who comprehend more or less completely the intervening conditions of Nature lying between the dense manifestation of the physical plane and the "incomprehensible" (though not less real) conditions of exalted planes—only by virtue of their superior enlightenment is it possible to get rid —first of the dread commonly connected with the process of passing on, and secondly of the embarrassment arising from occasional occurrences which without such enlightenment must either be disbelieved in defiance of evidence or dealt with by some grotesquely foolish explanation.

That idea applies very forcibly to the study of the

Creeds. The writers who reduced them to their present shape may have been using physical plane language in a metaphorical sense, or they may simply have swallowed without hesitation statements absurd on their face. But in either case we have to recognize, in the light of modern occult knowledge, that somewhere in the back history of the Creeds such knowledge must have been in the possession of some person or persons who inspired the earliest writers on the subject. And we reach, with the same confidence, the conclusion that current versions of the Creeds have been the product of painfully clumsy editing. Such work could only have been carried out properly by editors saturated with knowledge of natural conditions unseen by the multitude, while the actual editors were certainly not of that type. As a mere first illustration of that idea we may take the few words in the Apostles' Creed about the Resurrection and the Ascension: "The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father," etc. For people who can only think of a Being still in touch with the Earth as of human flesh and bones, the statement must either be rejected altogether as fabulous, or must lead to conceptions which, followed out in detail, are deplorably degrading. But directly we begin to understand how human personalities may function in full consciousness, after escaping (for a time or for good) from imprisonment in the physical body—functioning in another available vehicle, the astral body—we see light shed on alleged phenomena otherwise inexplicable. Many of us know now that natural law even provides for the temporary materialization of the astral form so that it may become apparent to physical senses. The story of the Ascension thus comes within the range of comprehensible occurrences, even if we make no attempt to interpret it

by more profound thinking in another way altogether.

Perhaps to understand its origin properly we must pay attention first to the ritual adopted in ancient Egypt in connection with initiation in the Mysteries, ages before the Christian era. The candidate lay down on a great wooden cross hollowed out so as to support the figure; was bound on it (quite loosely so as to suggest the voluntary character of the sacrifice) and then was put (mesmerically) into a deep trance which involved the emergence from the body of his real consciousness in the astral form. The body was then deposited in a sarcophagus, to typify burial. In the astral body the real entity was confronted with varied experiences educating him in the idea that he—the real entity—was beyond the reach of injury from fire, water, or even the subtler perils of the under-world. Then, on the third day the physical body was brought up into the light of the sunrise, and its "resurrection"—the return to it of the real Ego—was accomplished.

Followed out more closely, the Egyptian ceremony included other super-physical suggestions that may have been in the mind of those who sketched the earliest draft of the Creed. Before being awakened the candidate had touch, out of the body, with sublime levels of consciousness, as definitely an ascent into heaven as the under-world experiences were a descent into hell. The under-world in question is, of course, only a part, a low subdivision, of the enormous astral world that surrounds the physical globe, and is growing familiar in these days to many explorers. Its loftier realms are widely expanded regions that provide for happy conditions of life, and for happy conditions as varied as there are variations, amongst people still in life of aspirations pointing to happiness.

How did it come to pass that allusions to the ritual

of the Egyptian Mysteries found their way into the Christian Creed? To frame a conjecture we must begin by realizing that the Egyptian ceremonial was itself an allegory based on fundamental ideas connected with the science of human evolution—fully understood by those who invented the ritual. We can see this hinting at the ordeal of suffering incidental to the physical life, at the possibility of further suffering in the under-world as the penalty of evil-doing here, at the restful touch with happier conditions (the ascent into heaven), at the return to Earth-life after this—the resurrection or more literally the reincarnation of the Ego. Whoever infused into that early "creed literature" the first suggestion for a formula of belief must have had the Egyptian allegory in his mind, together with a perfect comprehension of its deep meaning, as also embodied in the Christian story.

For many reasons besides those that have to do with the illumination of the Creeds, it is deplorable that the clergy at large do not avail themselves of growing knowledge concerning the unseen worlds, which might enable them in turn to become more or less competent spiritual teachers. Some few are emerging from the stagnant majority, but for the rest to pose as experts in dealing with the interests of humanity lying outside those of the current life, while remaining ignorant of all that is now becoming known concerning the life hereafter, is like claiming to practise as a doctor without knowing more about the human body than was known to the barber-surgeons of the Middle Ages. Even the humblest spiritualist has realized that life hereafter is accessible to investigation. He may investigate very clumsily. His grasp even of the main idea may be very incomplete, but he knows that he is in touch with another plane of existence; that death, for all decent people,

is an introduction to life of a more promising kind than that which the physical plane provides for as a rule. The average clergyman, meanwhile, will not avail himself of the means by which he—with a more cultivated mind—might not only realize this much, but expand his comprehension of the ultimate spiritual possibilities awaiting humanity, to an enormous extent. If it were not so profoundly distressing there would be something supremely ludicrous in the spectacle of a vast organization, whose *raison d'être* is the general human thirst for guidance in spiritual thought, resolutely keeping aloof from avenues of research proved by abundant experience to be richly stored with spiritual wisdom for all who explore them.

This view of the matter will become more and more impressive when attention is turned to those passages in the Creeds which relate to the Virgin Birth. For those who only can think in terms of physical plane matter, the Virgin Birth seems to strain imagination less than an ascent to heaven by a tangible flesh-and-blood Christ. Birth of any sort is a mystery. A virgin birth would be only a little more mysterious than one of the ordinary kind. But the first thought that suggests a pause for reflection arises from the undeniable fact that other religions before Christianity claim virgin births for their founders. Is this merely due to a pious desire in each case to dignify the origin of the founder, or can it bear a more intricate explanation? This is certainly the case in reference to the adaptation of the familiar doctrine to the Christian story. To get at the actual truth hinted at metaphorically by the virgin birth idea, we must go rather deeply into modern developments of super-physical science.

By its help we are enabled to recognize the creative achievement, when a Solar System comes into existence, as involving successive processes: first the

formation of molecular matter from the atomic raw material pervading all space. We need not talk about the origin of *that*, any more than about the beginning of eternity. But a Solar System has a beginning and a destiny. It is an episode in eternity, and the creation of a world is an episode within the enormously protracted life of a Solar System. Molecular matter constituting in its various aspects the chemical elements (as they used to be called) becomes available for the formation of a globe destined to be a living planet. We see the process still going on in the growth of nebulæ with which the heavens abound. At a later stage Divine power pours out from itself the life principle. The vegetable and animal kingdoms come into existence. Later, again, when the human stage is reached, a further emanation from divinity invests definite beings with what is sometimes called "the Divine Spark," with that which renders such beings immortal, capable of developing through successive Earth-lives the loftier attributes of intellect and spirituality. The three stages are described by many phrases: sometimes as three waves of Atmic influence; sometimes as the first, second, and third Logos; sometimes as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Now when we attempt to see how this view of creation affects the language of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, we have to keep touch with another line of thought. The history of the Creeds points to a definite human origin, but the hints their language embodies point (as already suggested) to inspiration from a lofty source of wisdom; while it also betrays the corruption of such hints as successive versions have been prepared. Lofty wisdom has always lain hidden in the hands of the Elder Brethren of the race, who well knew that primitive conditions of civilization would not allow of its general diffusion.

The general diffusion, however, of large extracts from it is now in progress, taking shape in the Higher Occultism of recent years. Thus we can now discern in much ancient writing of a religious character the streak of inspiration and the superposed blundering of unenlightened transmitters of the inspiration. The passage in the Apostles' Creed about the Virgin Birth is a thrilling example of both influences. The adjective "virgin" has been applied in very ancient literature to *matter*, as due to the action of the First Logos, or the first creative wave. Only when—after intervening development—it is touched with the Third Logos (or Holy Ghost) can it engender the Christ principle. That idea gets twisted, by primitive ignorance capable only of thought along the lines of the physical senses, into the idea of a conception by a woman free of the conditions that generally give rise to conception. And then in the Nicene Creed we get the gross misunderstanding developed into the unfortunate expression, "the only-begotten Son of God."

How does this subtle interpretation of the familiar language fit in with the Gospel story which the Creeds seem to follow? The literal accuracy of that story has been challenged by critics who object to miracles, and nothing that can be called contemporary authentic history affords it any sanction; but from the occult point of view—that is to say, from the point of view of knowledge that relies on something much more trustworthy than written history—the story is contemplated in a deeply reverential spirit, but is not treated throughout as a mere record of occurrences. The occultist has resources at his disposal when investigating the past that leave mere literary research panting in the rear. The principle is intelligible to all who appreciate the significance of clairvoyance, in some of its suggestive developments.

One kind enables the clairvoyant to take cognizance of events going on at the time in some distant place. Another kind deals with events distant in past time. There is a memory of Nature in which some clairvoyants can share, and that is faultless in its exactitude. Clairvoyants who can do this while living the ordinary life among us are few, but now that the veil between ourselves and the Masters of Wisdom, our Elder Brethren, the Great Adepts, has been lowered to an appreciable extent, many others besides clairvoyants are in touch with Teachers for whom perfect clairvoyance in time is as much a natural faculty as common physical sight with us. Thus we need not be all dependent, when desirous of knowing what really happened in Palestine when Christianity was inaugurated, on Alexandrian writers who endeavoured to frame the record some centuries later. The memory of Nature may discredit the literal accuracy of that record without impairing in the faintest degree the reverential feeling with which we contemplate the inauguration. The sublimity of the Christ incarnation is all the better understood when we get rid of the idea that Jesus when a baby was already the Christ. No great spiritual being, taking a new physical plane birth for any reason or definite purpose, ever takes charge of the new body from infancy. That is done by one of his disciples. At maturity the disciple quits the body and the Master Ego occupies it. Most people at the present day are so densely ignorant of their own constitution that they may regard the idea as bewildering. At a certain level of knowledge the body is no more than a vesture to be put on or off as occasion may require.

In the case of the Christ incarnation the Ego who took charge of the body in the first instance was indeed of no ordinary type. And through later births Jesus (if we cling to the use of the old name) has

ascended to great altitudes in the Divine Hierarchy. But the Christ, who made use of the body he surrendered in Palestine, descended for that purpose from a loftier altitude still.

The bundle of miscellaneous statements at the end of the Apostles' Creed, and also imbedded in the Nicene Creed, need not claim much attention except so far as " the resurrection of the body " has been a stumbling-block for all who realize the gross absurdity of the phrase in its plain meaning, and may not understand that the astral body is that which resurges. But if we pass on to a consideration of the third great Creed with which orthodox Christianity is entangled, we have to deal with a blend of wisdom and folly that is very well worth the closest attention. In its naked brutality the Athanasian Creed drives many people out of churches in which it is read aloud. Some clergymen will not consent to read it at all. Others, whose orthodoxy is equal to the digestion of any horrors clothed in theological tradition, are able to do so. Meanwhile those in a position to reconstruct the teaching ludicrously caricatured by the language of the Athanasian Creed may easily divest it of its blasphemous absurdities and show it to have been originally inspired by profound wisdom and knowledge.

Summarized as it stands it consists of a series of assertions that contradict one another, together with a broad assurance that all who fail to believe them both ways will be damned. " Perish everlastingly " is the expression used at first, but a reference later on to " everlasting fire " invests it with more specific meaning. To avoid this fate we have to believe a string of assertions frankly described as incomprehensible. Strange to say, it is easy for any one who has profited by the light thrown in recent years on the course of human evolution to discern, behind

the gibberish of the Athanasian Creed as it stands, the profoundly scientific ideas that some exalted teacher of the past must have tried to suggest to some insufficiently receptive mind engaged in the effort to express them. For there is a period in the history of every great human race (ours is only one of many) when the state of each person's " belief," or capacity to understand deep spiritual truth, has an important bearing on his subsequent progress. The Solar System includes other human races besides our own. Various planets represent humanities at various stages of growth. Super-physical faculties even far below those of " the Masters of Wisdom " (now for the first time in this world's history giving out such information freely) reveal the design of the Solar System. Another planet was senior to the Earth in its development, and its humanity is already on a far higher level of evolution than our own. But human evolution is not a process in which superior Divine power pushes the pieces about, chessboard fashion, without regard to their own free will. The way in which this sometimes seems to be done is at the bottom of a hideous theological fancy, as grotesque as the language of the Athanasian Creed, to the effect that by Divine caprice some souls are " elect " from the beginning, and sure of salvation from hell-fire; others as surely destined from the beginning to that fate. But what really happens is this: some use their free will to accomplish spiritual progress of infinite importance. Others neglect their opportunities so persistently that they are left behind; not doomed to any horrible penalties, not annihilated as entities, but left to carry on their evolution, if they are willing to do so, in the next great planetary scheme following on in due order after the one they have failed to profit by to its fullest extent. Of course, it is impossible that anyone can begin to understand all this

without realizing the law of reincarnation as clearly as we all realize the circulation of the blood or any other fundamental principle of Nature. But the appreciation of *that* law corresponds to the state reached by a child learning to read, when he has mastered the alphabet.

Now in the light simply of the principle just defined as guiding successive human evolutions in the Solar System, we see in a flash the underlying idea caricatured by the language of the Athanasian Creed. Translate first the phrase " Whosoever will be saved " from the blasphemous meaning—saved from hell-fire—to that clearly intended by the original inspirer: " Whosoever would be safe from failure to attain the highest possibilities of his place in Nature," must " believe " or, in equivalent language, train himself to understand, certain great subtleties of spiritual truth which frankly for the physical brain at an early stage of its development are incomprehensible—*i.e.*, beyond its grasp. Physical, mental, and moral evolution proceed concurrently. In a world at a far more advanced stage than our Earth has yet reached, the majority of the Egos (Souls, spiritual entities, call them what you will) are engendering bodies adapted to express Egos of similar advancement. What is to be done, by the Powers that guide and control incarnations, with the Egos that have been so neglectful of their past opportunities that they are not fit to animate the bodies of the kind that are being born ? The Powers in question—and for the occultist they are conscious Beings on a very high level—can only do one thing with them—pass them on to the scheme of human evolution next in order of development. In other words, they have as a consequence of their own neglect incurred the inevitable necessity of beginning again. They are not destined to perish everlastingly, but they are thrown back in evolution

for a long period. All Oriental writings—and our "sacred" scriptures including the Creeds are saturated with the methods of Oriental writers—are prone to use words like "eternity" and "everlasting" as indicating any long period they are talking about, and not as we do—with a specific mathematical idea behind them.

Vastly more than the difficulty of reconciling the triple aspect of Divinity with the essential unity thereof is hinted at by the inspirer of the Athanasian Creed, whose clumsy interpreters have been content to hammer at the one problem of recognizing trinity in unity. But the elaboration of the teaching the inspirer sought to convey would only have been possible for writers fully illuminated with knowledge then "occult" in the strictest sense of the term. Early theologians were certainly not among such *illuminati*, and those responsible for the language of the Creed before us were so ill able to discriminate between credibility and absurdity, that they wove into their work the most loathsomely ridiculous view of the Resurrection that any of the Creeds suggest. Christ is described as sitting on the right hand of the Father "at whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account of their own works," with life or damnation everlasting as the only varieties of treatment available for their respective cases. And yet a little progress in super-physical knowledge, available now for all who will profit by current revelation, invests the idea of the Resurrection with poetical charm. The astral body, which rises again in every case when a discarded physical body melts away into its constituent elements, is susceptible of a wonderfully beautifying change. Leave the evil-doers out of account for the moment—the very bad cases have to be dealt with for a time in an appropriate fashion—as regards the vast majority

of decently behaved people, even though life may have dragged on till the physical vehicle is withered and destitute of all the graces of its youth, the astral body, in which the Ego passes away from it, soon undergoes a change the exact reverse of growing old on the physical plane. The old man or woman finds him or her self restored in appearance to the aspect worn in whatever has been the best period of the life concluded. All who are in touch with the astral world—the first super-physical aspect of the Earth—will be familiar with such changes; which, moreover, in the case of people who have, in the course of a long life, far transcended the mental and spiritual condition of what may have been physically their best period, will somehow show by new expression in that recovered best period the mental and spiritual attributes imperfectly developed during the Earth-life. It is sad to think that multitudes of innocent people are allowed by ignorant teachers to grovel with the foulest misconception of a beautiful natural truth, when they ought to be instructed in the exquisite charm of the arrangements made by natural law—in other words by Divine love—for their happiness and welfare between successive lives (as they ought to be) of strenuous effort on the physical plane.

And that same idea spreads over the whole area of conventional religious teaching. Creeds incredible as they stand are matched by theological doctrines that degrade the popular understanding, even when refined away to some extent by cultivated thinking, and represent the Divine nature capable of an anger so ignoble that it can be appeased by innocent bloodshed. The sublime Christian story in this way gets itself twisted into a shape in which it is offensive to any lofty conception of the Divine nature. Must the authorities of the Church go on *ad infinitum*, afraid to attempt a drastic revision of the language

employed in its services, for fear lest the whole ecclesiastical structure should fall in ruins as a consequence? If that fear checks them, the fact only shows how utterly they misunderstand the drift of enlightened spiritual teaching, available for all, now the veil has been drawn aside from what was previously occult. The wave of interest in that enlightenment is sweeping all over the civilized world. And far from making people hostile to the theory of an established Church, it makes them think how beautiful a condition of things would be realized if the Church would become a true spiritual University, representing the latest developments of super-physical knowledge, studying the varied conditions of life during and beyond physical incarnation, the possibilities of attainment inherent in humanity and the stupendous programme of the Cosmos to which our system belongs. In all lines of study with which intelligence can engage, if the mysteries of Nature are concerned, progress is obviously the bright lure of the future, stagnation an absurdity. And yet stagnation in thought is cherished as a principle by the defenders of the cut-and-dried formulas of medieval theology. Such defence can hardly be designed to shield faith; its purpose can only be to protect the institutions associated, to their deep discredit, with the stagnant thought. It is ridiculous almost beyond the reach of sarcasm that professed religious teachers should be the only kind who, parrot-like, repeat their lessons unchanged from year to year—a senseless articulation of sound—while out in the world discovery and illuminated thought are widening our intellectual horizons in every direction. That clearing vision of spiritual truth which the champions of stagnation cannot dim is really the explanation of the strange way in which modern civilization tolerates its clergy. All who profit by the growth of spiritual knowledge

feel that this will assuredly, in the long run, permeate the Church, and that, once emancipated from medieval fetters, that organization may be destined to a magnificent development. The trust that this may be possible depends perhaps on a far-sighted view of the future; but when in its moral progress civilization deprived orthodoxy of its torture-chambers and the stake, a change set in which may be slow, like the movement of a glacier, but is as certain of effect, in the long run, as the glacier flow, and will ultimately turn the frozen ice into a dancing river, sparkling in the sunshine.

## IMPRISONED IN THE FIVE SENSES

THE " Palace of Art " was replete with interest and charm for its mistress up to a certain stage in her spiritual evolution; but a time came when she found herself—though still in its luxurious magnificence—

> Shut up as in a crumbling tomb, girt round
> With blackness as a solid wall.

An emotion loftier than the thirst for pleasure constrained her to break away from its limitations, and to " purge her guilt " in a wider atmosphere of sympathy with her kind.

Tennyson's poetry is so full of meaning below the surface that one is tempted to discern a deep allegorical significance in the lines just quoted over and above their obvious bearing on the plain problems of human life—on selfishness and sympathy. For all humanity at the present period of its progress is shut in within the shining walls of its gorgeous artistic and scientific Palace, the contents sufficing amply for its needs, as long as it is satisfied to ignore all that lies beyond. The walls of the Palace are the senses, inherent in the vehicles of life on the physical plane. As long as they are our only avenues to consciousness they are not windows through which we gaze out into infinity, but dead walls confining our survey of Nature's mysteries to one aspect only of their manifold variety. Human intelligence of the usual type is, in truth, imprisoned in the five senses, although in the front already stand a few who have developed new senses which reveal the existence of worlds beyond worlds

in endless series, and, as turned back on the past, show modern civilization but just emerging from conditions analogous to childhood.

The character of the change achieved by those illuminated by new senses may best be comprehended by focussing imagination on the condition of a person born without the most important of the five—the sense of sight. He hears from others of natural phenomena he cannot himself cognize. Descriptions will not help him to realize colour or light. He will not understand what is meant by "seeing" things he cannot touch. Then grant him by a miracle the gift of sight, and picture in the mind the complicated revelation that ensues. The sudden endowment of an ordinary civilized man with senses already possessed by some persons in the vanguard of human progress would mean a revelation of even greater significance than that suggested in the case of the man born blind. The liberation of consciousness from previous limitations would be more thrilling in its effect than any change that could take place within those limitations. Human consciousness in its nature is qualified to give scope to perceptions all but infinite in their range. But with the ordinary run of mankind any given volume of consciousness incarnate in a human being can only deal with the fruit of the familiar senses. Of course faith and imagination seem to yield much more, but are cramped by the familiar senses—as shown by some ludicrous features of anthropomorphic religion. For practical purposes the senses are the channels through which we gain *knowledge*. When we guess or speculate along other channels, the mental conception of one generation is apt to be thrown aside by the next, and the history of Philosophy becomes an amusing cinema film, that can hardly be called a kaleidoscope, as there is not much beauty about it.

By far the most important discoveries which reward the efforts of those who escape from the imprisonment of the senses have to do with the definite possibilities of spiritual progress associated with enlightenment that may be attained through new channels of perception. But the laws and phenomena of Nature are not really divided by the hard-and-fast frontiers that sense-perceptions seem to define. Grant anyone amongst us certain new senses, and he will not merely be enabled to perceive new regions of existence with appropriate scenery and decorations, brimming over with life of many kinds, but will find the familiar features of the life around us all—those of the physical plane—much more full of meaning than they seemed to be previously. I will illustrate this statement by describing a scientific research carried on within the last few years by means of super-physical senses, and happily involving something like a self-contained proof of its conclusions.

It began under my own guidance, when working with a friend brilliantly endowed with super-physical senses. I had found that, quite independently of results they gave us in reference to higher conditions of life beyond the change called death, they were ultra-microscopic in their character as applied to physical nature. Could they be so applied as to enable my friend to *see* an ultimate molecule of physical matter? The magnitude of such molecules is so minute that mathematical calculations with which, among others, the great name of Lord Kelvin is associated, lead to the conclusion that thirty trillion molecules of water are included in the volume of a cubic centimetre. My friend undertook to try, and I suggested a molecule of gold as the body to be examined. My friend emerged from the condition in which he could attempt to do this, declaring that, although the molecules of gold could be individually

discerned, they were far too complicated to be described. They each of them consisted of an intricate combination of smaller atoms clearly belonging to a finer order of matter. This observation led me to suggest that perhaps molecules of matter of less atomic weight than gold would be more manageable, and we next dealt with a molecule of hydrogen gas. This was found to be composed of atoms like those of the gold molecule, but relatively few in number. They could be counted. They were eighteen in number, grouped in a definite design and in rapid movement. The rapidity of their movement did not interfere with the counting, for reasons I need not stop now to explain.

We then went on to examine a molecule of oxygen. This was found to be more complicated, but still within the reach of careful counting. The number of minor atoms was 290—a figure the significance of which was at once seen to be remarkable. Divided by 18 it gives us 16·1, a close approximation to the recognized atomic weight of oxygen. Atomic weights, on the usual scale, are calculated on the principle of reckoning the weight of an atom of hydrogen as unity. The relative atomic weights of other bodies are derived from calculations dependent on their varied combinations, again in a way I need not go into here, as that has to do with commonplace chemistry. Was the ratio 18 to 290 operative in other cases? The atom of nitrogen was examined and found to consist of 214 minor atoms. That again gave the recognized atomic weight when divided by 18. The result was extremely suggestive, but did not yet constitute proof that the law would run all through the series of the so-called chemical elements. Meanwhile the minor atoms claimed attention. They were apparently the really *ultimate* form of physical matter—atoms of ether, themselves below the limits of sense-per-

ception. Only when in combined masses—if the expression can be used in reference to masses so minute as the atoms of the chemical elements—do they come within those limits. Thus incidentally the research I am describing brought out a new discovery. The etheric atoms do enter into combination in numbers less than 18, but then they do not constitute any known physical bodies. They are molecular varieties of ether, the atomic ether being the kind that fills all space, the molecular ethers being definitely aggregated around the planets.

So far the research was carried out in the year 1895, and happily the results, including all that I have described above, were published at the time and are available for reference. Six years later Mme. Curie discovered radium, and its entrance on the scene revolutionized chemical science in more ways than one. Study of the cathode ray had already introduced us all to the "electron" as an entity, but radium introduced us to the idea that physical matter consisted of electrons, and that transmutation was a possibility in nature, thus vindicating the alchemical theory of the Middle Ages which nineteenth-century science had ridiculed. Inquiry of the ordinary kind was now directed to the questions, what is an electron? and how many enter into the lightest known atom—that of hydrogen? The clairvoyant research above described had answered both of these questions in advance, but was not thought worthy of notice by scientists of the orthodox type. The electron came to be treated as an atom of electricity by some scientific leaders, though to others that view was unacceptable. Electricity is a force, not a form of matter. To speak of an atom of electricity is like speaking of an atom of gravitation, and that would be transparently ridiculous. Occult research had shown from the beginning that the electron, though itself

an atom of ether, carried a definite unit charge of electricity. Orthodox opinions as to the number of electrons in an atom of hydrogen vary within very wide limits. Some give us figures from 1 to 5; some others guess by hundreds, and 700 is rather a favourite estimate. The few of us who trusted the clairvoyant research felt sure the real number was 18. Then in a few years came the proof of this, a proof again so far ignored by science at large, though its ultimate recognition is really a matter of certainty.

The research of 1895 was only resumed several years later by my clairvoyant friend, assisted then by another qualified observer. The task they undertook was much more elaborate than the former. Its purpose was to ascertain by actual counting the number of etheric atoms entering into the composition of a large number of chemical elements, also to depict the grouping of the etheric atoms. The complexity of the grouping was bewildering. Gold, for instance, consists of three combined groups, an exact description of which, unless illuminated by diagrams, would be hardly intelligible. The important idea to realize is that the counting could only be effected by degrees, the etheric atoms in each group reckoned up separately with the assistance of a secretary who wrote down the figures as they were called out, and only added them up after the protracted observations were complete. The total was 3,546. Then came the interesting question—what figure would that yield divided by 18? The answer is 197. The recognized atomic weight of gold is 195·74. The deeply interesting principle was vindicated and, as the protracted research went on, over fifty of the recognized chemical elements were examined, and *in all cases* the same principle was found to be operative. I have a table before me as I write, showing the figures reached in 57 observations of elements commonplace and

rare; and the result is nothing less than a demonstration of the accuracy of the original observation showing the atom of hydrogen to consist of 18 etheric atoms. The notion that the counting can in any way have been made to fit the theory is dissipated by the complication of the work. Neither the observer nor the secretary could have foreseen how the figures given and recorded by degrees would fit in with the theory when added up. Eight of the observed elements have over 3,000 atoms each; eight more have over 2,000. And an interesting hint supporting the trustworthiness of the research is due to the fact that the observers found in the atmosphere two molecules that could not be identified with any known element. Their electric atoms numbered respectively 54 and 402, yielding the atomic weights 3 and 22·33. Now in the course of Sir J. J. Thomson's research (by ingenious electrical methods) into the vagaries of the electron, he found reason to believe and to announce that there must be two unknown elements with atomic weights of (about) 3 and 22. He little realized that the announcement vindicated a previous announcement to the same effect giving similar results attained by clairvoyant research.

But the 3 and 22 discovery was of insignificant importance compared with the discovery of the true meaning of atomic weights. No work done in laboratories in connection with the electron or radio-activity is of such far-reaching significance as the atomic-weight discovery due to the clairvoyant research. It shows us ether to be ponderable matter, though in its uncombined form it defies examination by methods appealing to the physical senses. Optical methods tell us a good deal about the ether, but are silent in regard to its mechanical attributes. Clairvoyant research is the only kind that can expand our knowledge of Nature across the threshold of the region which lies beyond mere laboratory research.

In describing the work done so far by the clairvoyant method as applied to certain problems in chemistry, I have not stopped to give chapter and verse in reference to the dates of magazines or pamphlets issued from time to time and duly recording results. In verifying what I have written I will gladly assist any serious scientific inquirer capable of appreciating the simple truth that the research described is the most important contribution to our comprehension of physical chemistry that has been made within any recent period.

And yet, striking as it is, it is among the least important of the results attained by human intelligence when once that breaks free from imprisonment in the physical senses. The light shed on the gradual development of the human race by clairvoyant research illuminates evolution, and the magnitude of the design, to an extent that renders the earliest Egyptian and Chaldean records modern history by comparison. Besides being ultra-microscopic, clairvoyance of the highest order is retrospective almost to infinity. There is no mystery in the matter as treated from one point of view. The duly qualified clairvoyant can get into conscious touch with the Memory of Nature, which is infinite in its range. *That* is a great mystery, no doubt, only to be interpreted by very lofty wisdom; but without reaching to such levels the clairvoyant who has but just broken out of prison can share in the universal memory to a certain extent. One of the best books (Samuel Laing's *Human Origins*), written previously to recent clairvoyant research, but dealing with the evidence afforded by geological strata, pushes back the presence of Man on earth to the Tertiary period. But a few hundred thousand years represent a mere fraction of the time since the earth was first inhabited by humanity, and not merely by humanity but by nations of advanced

civilization. The mists that hung at first over traditions of Atlantis are now clearing up. Incredulity, scoffing at Plato's story, gave way at last to the soundings of the *Challenger*. The Atlantic bed confessed part of the truth. Geologists accepted the information and, having left off laughing at the idea, proceeded to indicate the exact region in which the last surviving remnant of the original Altantic continent lies now under water. But it was not the business of the *Challenger* or the geologist to describe the inhabitants of either the last remnant or the great original continent. That was accomplished by clairvoyant research and the results were duly published, years in advance of one occasion I remember when a map of the Atlantic bed was exhibited at a conversazione of the Royal Society, showing "Poseidonis" (the last piece of the former continent submerged 9000-odd years B.C.) lying under the waves of the present ocean. Recorded evidence concerning the character and date of the great catastrophe has been derived from the hieroglyphics of Mexico and Yucatan, and fuller information on the subject has been obtained—in another way. The few among us qualified to carry on super-physical research are enabled, by virtue of their abnormally developed senses, to get into touch with still more abnormally developed Beings whose progress, though they have emerged originally from humanity, has so far engaged them in work on higher planes of nature that they are lost to sight as regards ordinary mankind. But they have attained to loftier conditions of existence without losing their sympathy with humanity of the ordinary type. To do full justice to the idea would mean re-writing books devoted to the subject, but for the moment it should be enough to feel that the influences making for variety in human life—that show us an ascending scale beginning with the savage and

culminating in the great Masters of science, literature, and art, are not likely to stop abruptly even at those levels. Its higher progress may stretch beyond commonplace vision, as the ultra-violet rays of the spectrum are beyond such vision, but we can gain certain assurance that ultra-violet rays exist in Nature, and that those who may be described as Masters of Wisdom and Knowledge exist also.

Thus clairvoyant research and information combined enable us to trace the origin and progress of Atlantean civilization through periods in the past to be counted not in thousands but in millions of years. And behind them again back into other millions during which the human form, as we know it, was gradually developed from lower forms. Indeed, if we go far enough back we shall find life, which from some points of view we may call already human, functioning in vehicles of consciousness not yet entirely physical. But leaving that part of the story out of account, the information already accumulated concerning the Atlantean races shows conventional speculation relating to anthropology and ethnology to be mere groping in the dark. Clairvoyant observation gives us a clear-daylight comprehension of the actual facts. Commonplace thinking on these subjects is entangled with phrases that are utterly misleading—the stone, bronze, and iron ages; the neolithic and the paleolithic periods. Flint implements, of course, have their story to tell. They show that regions of the world where they are found, at dates vaguely suggested by geology, were inhabited by men of a very primitive type. Very likely. At early Atlantean periods before civilization had developed, migrations of early sub-races of Atlanteans spread all over the world. They slowly outgrew early conditions without sharing the stimulating influences operative in the evolutionary vortex from which they had been thrown off. Con-

currently with a stone age in some fragments of land emerging from the sea in the region we now call Europe, an age of advanced science, of stupendous engineering achievements, of intricate sociology was in full activity in the West. As the geography of the world was shaped anew in some Eastern countries immense progress was accomplished there. In *Human Origins* Mr. Laing is impressive concerning the certainty that high civilization prevailed in Egypt long before Menes—or the 7000-odd years of Egyptian history. Certainly it prevailed for hundreds of thousands of years before then, the direct gift of Atlantean civilization previous to its decline.

Perhaps, however, the most deeply interesting aspect of the whole Atlantean story has to do with the moral changes that have gone on in the world since that strange period in which the decline becomes manifest. In their intellectual perfection the Atlanteans in some ways were farther on than ourselves. They controlled some forces of nature we have not yet got command of, and they were past-masters in the arts of metallic transmutation, which, as a theoretical possibility, our chemists have only just discerned. But they had not even got a glimpse of the moral beauty of unselfishness, care for the welfare of others, love, in any of its loftier aspects. Altruism, philanthropy, would have been ideas for which their language furnished no equivalent expression.

Thus we gain a comprehension of human progress on the large scale as a series of spiral cycles, in the course of which we return to previous conditions, but on a higher level. Modern civilization is now returning to a stage in intellectual progress reached by the Atlanteans at remote periods in the past, but with certain very important embellishments. Aviation and transmutation, now beginning to engage our attention, were, as already said, Atlantean achievements;

but we resume acquaintance with them, plus moral progress, in which Atlantis was sadly deficient.

The limitations of sense, besides obscuring the past, veil the prospects of the future. Once they are broken through, the Divine plan of human evolution stretches out before us on a scale of startling magnificence. Clairvoyance of the higher order introduces us, as already explained, to those advanced leaders of our race described above as Masters of Wisdom and Knowledge. We are enabled to recognize them as linking ordinary humanity with the Divine Hierarchy. This extends upwards to infinity, but we touch a sublime truth in realizing that on what may be called (though only by comparison) its lower levels, it is recruited from ordinary humanity. The prettiest among conventional conceptions of the after-life show us no more than happy conditions of super-physical existence, dignified no doubt by the actual recognition of Divinity. But such beatitude seems, regarded by ordinary religious teaching, as a finality. Clearer vision shows the spiritual future as infinitely progressive, and the sublime conditions attained by Masters of Wisdom merely a stage of progress: a stage which the majority of the human race ought to attain in the long run, though the length of that run is all but beyond the reach of imagination. As some have attained it already, many more may do so in the future, greatly in advance of its attainment by the majority. The conditions of such relatively rapid progress are the principal subjects of study for pupils of the higher occultism. Incidentally in connection with that study light is let in on many regions of scientific research besides those to which allusion has already been made.

Emerging from the entirely primitive or childish view of the Sun and Moon and starry heavens as designed merely to light up the earth, commonplace

modern speculation assigns inhabitants to some, at all events, of the planets. And the stars are known to Astronomy as Suns, probably with families of planets in each case. That knowledge can be reached by simple intelligence working with the results of observation carried on within the limits of normal sense-perception. The methods of observation available for the advanced leaders of our race put them in touch with a new kind of astronomy that may be called " Vital," as distinguished from the mechanical astronomy which deals only with magnitude and motion. Mechanical astronomy is as different from the Vital as a mere geography book, just defining the boundaries of the various countries, would differ from exhaustive accounts of the people inhabiting each, their manners, customs, arts and sciences, their political organizations and their sociology. Physical observation has shown that Mars must be inhabited by intelligent and competent beings, their huge artificial works proving this—in spite of tenacious incredulity clinging in the case of a few astronomers to the idea that the Lowell's Canals are the offspring of chance. Vital Astronomy enables us to understand that the inhabitants of Mars are linked in evolution with ourselves, the inhabitants of this Earth, but at an earlier stage of progress. The various planets of the Solar System are not disconnected from one another in their design and destinies, as they seem disconnected in space. On higher planes of manifestation—regions of which the imprisoning senses give us no hint—the immortal units of humanity, the conscious Egos, migrate at stupendous intervals of time from some globes to some others. The plan in detail is much more elaborate than this rough sketch would suggest, but it has the intellectual charm of showing the whole system to be one coherent organism. The planet Mercury is also

blended as regards its vital purpose with the human life of the Earth, while already the human life of the planet Venus has attained to far loftier conditions than we here have reached as yet—is, in fact, a senior evolution as compared with our own, and one in which humanity is set entirely free from the limitations of the physical senses. If anyone mentally still imprisoned in these objects to this statement on the ground that proximity to the Sun must make Venus and Mercury very hot, the answer is that while Nature has adapted flesh and blood to suit (with more or less success) the climatic conditions of the Earth, it is quite equal to the task of providing vehicles of consciousness for climates above our boiling-point, that can breathe comfortably in an atmosphere at the temperature of super-heated steam. Chemistry has still some discoveries to make, and the composition of liquids that provide Mercury, for instance, with lakes and rivers defying evaporation at, say, 300° F. would be very interesting if it could be ascertained. But less so after all than the contemplation, possible for our prison-breakers, of the delightful conditions of harmony and peace which are the keynotes of existence on Mercury, and in a greater degree still on Venus.

The hints I have given so far of the way in which senses—avenues of consciousness—superior to those we are most of us used to, enlarge our comprehension of Nature, will naturally suggest the inquiry how they affect our comprehension of the conditions each of us encounters when we pass through the change called death. The answer is simple. They make the change perfectly intelligible; they render the region of existence into which we shall pass after undergoing the change a *pays de connaissance*. That is the foremost discovery with which they are concerned. Current discussion as to whether we really do live

again—a possibility rendered doubtful for many people because religious teachers seem to know so little about it—is sadly ludicrous in view of the certain knowledge on the subject lying ready for us only just outside our prison doors. People, indeed, still within them are already inexcusable if they doubt the main principle, for abundant information has been smuggled through to them, and telephones—so to speak—have been set up within the prison walls which enable us to talk with people outside. But one must get outside fully to understand what lies beyond. Dartmoor is big, but England is bigger, and beyond England lie other countries of stupendous magnitude. The physical plane is an extensive region, but regions within the cognizance of superior senses are more extensive in more than a corresponding fashion. Our astral world into which we pass when escaping from the prison of the senses is an envelope surrounding the physical globe, but enormous in comparison. To the appropriate senses it is as solid and variegated as this. And there are numberless variations of condition for dwellers in the vast astral globe. The Earth-life has been used by some in a manner productive as its consequence of great happiness and wide views of Nature—by others unhappily in ways that entail consequences of a very different order, with which people who lead commonly decent lives need not trouble their imagination; unless, indeed, without any self-regarding apprehension, they want to understand the sublime harmonies of a Divine design which would be violated disastrously if the ulterior results of good and bad lives were uniformly the same. Thus the astral world provides purgatorial conditions of highly varying intensity, through which those who have badly misused the opportunities of physical life must pass before attaining happier conditions, while, for a very large number of people who

have led fairly creditable lives, the happy conditions are reached at once. The study of the way in which these vary in turn—meeting the needs of the simply innocent immigrants as appropriately as they provide for highly evolved entities—the foremost representatives of earthly wisdom and achievement—is a profoundly interesting but a very elaborate study, to subserve which, however, abundant literature is now in existence.

This, moreover, will enable anyone who wishes to push the inquiry farther to gather some information as to the way in which the five senses may be reinforced by the development of new ones. In an imperfectly developed condition there are two organs in the human brain which, when fully matured, will respond to the higher vibrations of certain media in which we are unconsciously immersed, and convey impressions to the brain as vivid as those conveyed by the eye when dealing with objects normally visible. These organs are the Pineal Gland and the Pituitary body. In some few cases they are already active; in some others they might be cultivated into activity; in the vast majority of cases they are hopelessly incapable of such development during the current life of the Ego concerned. Their development in the next physical life depends on the extent to which, in the current life, the person in question devotes thought, study, and effort to super-physical aspiration, for the laws governing the growth of form recognize thought and effort as potent forces contributing to the result.

Indeed, if we cling to the prison metaphor the situation is abnormal in more ways than one, for the authorities are by no means anxious to keep their prisoners within their respective cells. They must —in obedience to still higher authority—refrain from actually helping prisoners to escape, but they do not

interfere with those trying to do so. Prison-breaking, far from being an offence, is their right—is regarded as altogether meritorious. Once clear of the walls the fugitive is never pursued or brought back. Authority wishes him well, and cheers his farther progress. He must, however, break out by daring and force, not by cunning. There is a door leading out of the prison into the free world beyond that is always unfastened. Any prisoner can push it open and go out that way if he chooses, but all are put upon their honour not to attempt an escape that way. And if they break faith and do so, they are terribly disappointed, for the door leads out of the prison, it is true, but to regions in which the conditions are still more distressing than those of the prison itself, and there is no short cut leading out of them in turn. To plod through the forbidden country may take a longer time than would have been spent in the prison waiting for the order of release, due in any case sooner or later.

Nor must it be imagined that the period spent in prison is wasted time. Physical life is, indeed, subject to limitations trying to the patience of those who know something about the infinite realities that lie beyond, but the law of all progress defines the physical plane as the region of Beginnings. No one word precisely fits the idea; nor does it apply to the beginnings of Form. Divine Ideation, Creative Thought, takes its rise on much higher planes, but culminates on the Physical. There, individualized consciousness, human Egos—working in forms completed from one point of view, though very far from perfection as contemplated from another—can start on an upward journey. From that time on, their progress depends on themselves. They are launched on the upward arc of evolution and all the limitations accumulated during the downward arc fall away, or rather are

shaken off as the onward progress is accomplished. The work of shaking them off is difficult in the beginning. Most people are imperfectly aware of the disabilities under which they labour. The senses have given them a rich and apparently ever-growing store of knowledge and power. They are—the foremost of them—proud and content—within their Palace. The multitude have not yet even risen to the appreciation of its opulent resources. None the less, the Beginning, for every single Ego of the countless millions, must be made from the physical point of departure. And on the physical plane—the prison of my favourite metaphor—the countless millions will accumulate and remain until they make it. In that fact lies the clue to the course that has been pursued in recent years by agents of the Divine Hierarchy who have guided the current outburst of information relating to the higher destinies available for mankind, information which constitutes a feature of ever-increasing importance in modern civilization. The steps taken were impossible at a former time. Bigotry dominated the mental atmosphere. Ignorant power stamped upon all manifestations of independent thought. It was only when freedom had " broadened slowly down from precedent to precedent " that a place was found among men for messengers from a loftier world. Now the message has been poured forth through many channels. In varying forms of expression it is the same in all cases. Look beyond the perishable interests of transient life in the physical body. Comprehend the scheme of infinite magnificence to which you belong. Get the clear view now attainable of the whole Divine programme. Make the beginning that every human creature must make soon or late, and the results are bound to transcend even the most glowing anticipation.

# OUR VISITS TO THIS WORLD

THE materialist who regards human life as beginning in the cradle and ending in the grave is at all events consistent, though he insults Divine intelligence. But people who shrink from believing in final extinction, and nevertheless regard each new life as a fresh beginning insult human understanding. They ask us, in other words, to accept the idea of a stick with only one end. We can think of a stick with no ends at all, or anyhow can talk of it as we talk of Eternity, but to be on speaking terms with Infinitude we must avoid the acquaintance of futurities that have no past. Some phenomena—a bonfire, for instance—may begin and cease to be, but human immortality is an idea that claims in the forward direction to share the attributes of Duration, and cannot do without them in the other.

The word "life" needs to be handled with care. If people go on living after their bodies are buried or burned, their presence on the physical plane is merely an episode in their lives. If these continue they must, under other conditions, have been going on before on other planes. Seventy or eighty years of activity in the physical body constitute part of a life. Its continuance has ceased to be a matter of guesswork for the millions concerned with the simple variety of occult research described as Spiritualism, and the current interest in that research is rapidly rendering the current contempt for it in most newspapers an illustration of their patient efforts to represent the greatest stupidity of the greatest number. A deeper

research than that content with merely proving that people are still alive after they are " dead " introduces us to the logical conclusion that they were alive before they were born, and thus, by stages, to the inevitable conclusion that consciousness functioning sometimes on one plane of Nature, sometimes on another, is never " to one engine bound," but always cycles round and round. In hard scientific language this conclusion brings us up against the doctrine of Reincarnation, which, sharing the fate of many others, is made to seem an offence to lofty aspiration by getting itself profoundly misunderstood.

At first, introduced to the Western world in the earliest theosophical writings, it captured a great array of supporters because, for the first time, it enabled them to contemplate the inequalities of human condition without feeling that they were incompatible with belief in Divine justice. One could fall back on the theory that Divine ways were inscrutable, but it was comforting to grasp a new idea that prevented them from seeming, on the face of things, ways we should personally be ashamed of. Objections were forthcoming none the less. Spiritualists said our friends on the other side do not know anything about the new idea. Others declared that they did not like this world, and did not want to come back to it, confident that Nature would not be so rude as to disregard their wishes. To others, again, the notion of beginning life afresh at the perambulator stage was intolerable; and affectionate parents, mourning a loved daughter, were horrified to think that on passing on themselves they might be greeted with the news that she had been reincarnated in Timbuctoo. From another point of view the disbeliever declared that he did not remember having had a previous life, therefore it was obvious that

neither he nor anybne else ever had one. Objections of these varied kinds are very amusing to all who understand more or less completely the conditions of human progress through the ages. The friends of the Spiritualist on "the other side" are enjoying the freshness of a renewed life, the reunion with others they may have cared for, the vivid reality of that next world they have reached; they are no more concerned with further changes that may lie in the remote future than boys at a school, full of enthusiasm for cricket, ponder on problems that perplex the invalid of sixty or seventy. Nor if they did develop a premature interest in the remote future could they readily get information. If they have it in them to advance to higher levels of the Astral world, beyond that they touch on first going over, they will ultimately acquire knowledge; but even that is not certain unless they have been tinged during physical life with some aspiration towards higher knowledge.

A fundamental and deeply important fact connected with higher spiritual progress is hinted at by what has just been said. The physical plane of life is pre-eminently associated with *all* beginnings. Its importance in this respect cannot be overrated. This condition underlies the principle of Reincarnation, is the root of its necessity. Spiritualism and other forms of belief concerning the future life include a vague expectation that infinite spiritual progress is possible after death down here. So it is, but the permanent Ego is not spoon-fed with higher knowledge unless he has engendered a desire for it in his working period on the physical plane. If he has not done this Nature gives him such blissful rest on higher levels of consciousness as he may be entitled to by the use he has made of his physical opportunities, and then another set of opportunities in the shape of renewed physical life. Of course, there are other

purposes to be served by that renewed life to be discussed later on, but for the moment, in reference to the first steps in our comprehension of loftier destinies, Reincarnation may be thought of as the system or method adopted by Nature for teaching the law of Reincarnation. At earlier stages of human progress the young Ego has not begun to concern itself with the study of natural law—is merely gathering, life after life, preliminary experience of pleasure and pain, of right and wrong, of emotion and desire and their consequences. Does the use of the word "young" in this sense seem to involve the fallacy of assigning a beginning to that which has no end? There is no real inconsistency in the language used. The essence of the young Ego has emerged from infinite Divine life, but at one period has crystallized as a centre of consciousness within the Divine life, and in conformity with laws coming to be understood develops expanded capacity by degrees. Gradually and slowly this result is accomplished.

> Man as yet is being made and ere the crowning Age of ages,
> Shall not æon after æon pass and touch him into shape?

But his consciousness may be traced back through animal and vegetable forms, through solar systems and nebulæ to past infinitudes of manifestation.

Perhaps a simpler answer than has been given above might more easily meet the objection of spiritualists who say that their spirit friends do not know anything of Reincarnation. Some of them do! But the fact that some of them deny it is quite intelligible when we comprehend their limitations, and unimportant. For most of us belief in the rotundity of the Earth is not shaken by the denial of a few who still believe it to be flat.

When disbelief in the law of Reincarnation arises from dislike for the idea, one may first of all suggest

that people who deeply dislike the law which brings trouble on those who pick other people's pockets do not by such dislike divert its course. But in truth, people only dislike the idea for want of understanding it. They do not realize, for one thing, that the force which gives rise to Reincarnation in each individual case is a desire on the part of the Ego to reincarnate. If no such desire were generated, on the plane of the Ego, after the personal life of the entity in question has been fully enjoyed or worked out in the Astral world, and then has merged itself in the Ego on a higher plane, Reincarnation would not take place; but the hypothesis for the occultist is unthinkable. The desire for fresh experience is as inevitably engendered in the Ego when all so far gathered has been absorbed, as the desire for fresh food is engendered during physical life in the body, when previous supplies have been finally disposed of. This state of things invests the familiar protest against having to come back to this vale of tears with a very ludicrous aspect. Even after eating too much and being for the moment disinclined for more food, people in general know that at some future time they will be hungry again; but, if while suffering from repletion they declared that for ever and ever they would detest food, the declaration would be unconvincing. The advanced Ego *knows* that he must come back to life on Earth in order eventually to get on. Certainly, by some, a god-like stage is reached when an Ego may have risen above the laws affecting ordinary humanity, but long before then his lives in connection with the Earth will have included complete comprehension of all such laws. People who criticize them on the basis of profound ignorance of the way they work have certainly not attained the condition which might enable them to be a law unto themselves.

Of all the misconceptions prompting disbelief in

Reincarnation, the most ridiculous is that which makes some critics shrink with horror from the idea of beginning life again in the cradle. They somehow imagine *themselves* with their present elaborate consciousness subject to its miserable limitations. The law does not give rise to any such ghastly absurdity, but to get rid entirely of the painful delusion in question we have to go into a closer study of the way the process of rebirth is effected than was usually possible for those who accepted the main idea at the first blush, as accounting for the inequalities of life.

The method Nature pursues in providing an Ego with a fresh incarnation shows the absurdity of what may be called the perambulator objection: When—long after the close of the Earth period of the previous life—the time has come for the Ego to plunge again into the experiences of the physical plane, the preparations for this are very gradual. And they vary within a very wide range of possibility according to the stage of growth the Ego has reached. But in any case the child in its baby stage is not an embodiment of the Ego, or of the last personality in which it manifested, any more than the sloppy clay foundations of a new house are already inhabited by the person who is destined to live in it when it is fully built and furnished. The amplification of this all-important view of the matter may be postponed for the moment, for the broad fact disposes of the delusion people suffer from if they think of *themselves* as enduring the limitations of childhood when coming back to Earth-life. Before dealing fully with the gradual way in which a new child's body is rendered fit for occupation by the appointed tenant, attention may as well be paid to a difficulty of a more dignified order than any already noticed. Does the law of Reincarnation conflict with the supremely important aspect of the

next world, in which we think of it as reuniting under happy conditions the loving friends, wives and daughters, sons and fathers, torn asunder by death—so cruelly torn asunder as it often seems to limited vision. Reincarnation no more interferes with the reunion on higher planes of those who have loved one another on this one than our next summer's holiday will be interfered with by the precession of the equinoxes. That astronomical process will affect climate in future, but it need not worry us for the moment. Nor, indeed, as regards the law of Reincarnation need the most far-sighted view of the future embarrass the conditions—on the Astral plane—of those who have loved one another on Earth. On the contrary it expands to infinitude the value of that relationship. Other natural conditions operate at first in the Astral life, and no matter what intervals of our time elapse between the passing over of the persons concerned, experience of Astral life shows that the old look of an old-age body—reflecting itself for a brief period in the Astral form—rapidly disappears. As a broad rule people all grow young again in appearance, after passing over in old age, or revert to whatever they may think of as the prime of life, the aspect best worthy of perpetuation. The few years that for a time separate the person who dies first from the beloved other who lingers long in physical life, fade into insignificance in the long companionship of the Astral life. Then eventually (after certain developments on higher levels), those who really care for one another reincarnate more or less simultaneously, and come into renewed relationships or intimacies on the Earth plane. To quarrel with the law of Reincarnation, because it separates people who can only be happy together, is a blunder for which it is difficult to imagine a parallel. One might as well complain of the Sun for not shining, or

of the Earth for not turning round. Reincarnation is a force that does not disperse people, but gathers them together. It does this not merely as regards loving couples: it unites great groups of people in sympathetic friendship. Whenever exceptional opportunities have enabled occult students to gain knowledge concerning the former lives of themselves and their friends or belongings, current intimacies are always found to be the fruit of similar relationships in former times. Where some man and woman are found united in this life by the beautiful bond of a real mutual love, they are invariably found to have been man and wife in repeated lives for thousands of years. And community of interest in devotion to spiritual progress links large groups of people together in life after life. Through the ages they may scatter sometimes, when individual attractions draw them off in one direction or another. They always come together again sooner or later.

In view of what has just been said it is hardly necessary to deal seriously with the self-sufficient foolishness of people who contend that, because they do not remember any former life, no one has lived formerly. Many people do remember, as one result of awakening faculties not yet common to all, and the fact that the vast majority do not remember is easily accounted for. The human race, as a whole, is not far enough advanced to work with the senses that have been brought into activity by a few pioneers of progress. The cultured minority of civilized countries, even, is little more than half-way on along the course marked out for the millions of years of human activity, while, if we strike an average between an Australian savage and the President of the Royal Society, the result will be rather disheartening. And, indeed, though we may take the holder, at any time, of the exalted office referred to as one who "stands on the height

of his life," and of life as generally understood, the occult student at all events enjoys " a glimpse of a height that is higher," and expands his consciousness accordingly. But apart, indeed, from the fact that the majority even of cultured people in civilized communities have not yet developed faculties that enable them to remember past lives, there is a very good reason why Nature does not allow them to do so, at their present stage of progress. Very often they have complicated " Karma " to work out. They have done things in past lives that entail painful consequences in the current life. To be able in advance, by remembering the incidents, to foresee the painful consequences impending, would be an arrangement cruelly aggravating the pain. For the clear sight of past causes it is much better that most of us should wait. When spiritual attainment has cured us of the tendencies that engender evil consequences; when appropriate aspirations and acquired knowledge co-operate, the higher senses (which include the power of looking back) will certainly dawn among earnest students of the Higher Occultism—the super-physical science of Nature which illuminates the whole Divine scheme for those devoted to it. There are some who already have these higher senses in full activity, and can not only look back on the former lives they themselves have passed through, but on the companionships and acquaintanceships of those lives, so that a great many others now in physical life are enabled at second hand to acquire knowledge of their former doings. Thus we can observe in actual operation the working of the law referred to above, which brings sympathetic friends, besides those linked by the supreme tie of love, into incarnation together. In this way I have been able to identify twenty or thirty of my present friends and acquaintances, as having played parts together in former dramas—parts that have curiously

varied in character sometimes, under Karmic influences of diverse kinds.

Before examining the method—or methods, for they vary—by means of which reincarnations are accomplished, let us glance at the esoteric necessity for the process. Theologians, by thoroughly misunderstanding God and Nature—*i.e.*, supreme Divine power and the mechanism of manifestation—have taught people to think of the Earth-life and its conditions with disdain (if they can), and to contemplate an eternal future of hymns, wings and inferior musical instruments with as much ardour as the prospect permits. Expanding knowledge enables us to realize that the Earth-life is in the same relation to the spiritual future that (during this life) a man's business or work is to the enjoyments that wait upon success. The slow processes of early evolution fit the growing Ego for his work in the Earth-life. Then he has to do it, and earn the results. Few Egos would do it successfully the first time of trying. Nature is very patient, and gives them almost any number of repeated opportunities for trying again—*i.e.*, so many Earth-lives with periods of rest between each. Only here can they do the work. Careless thinkers vaguely imagine that spiritual progress—without work to provide for it—will be somehow accomplished on spiritual planes after the shackles of physical existence are contemptuously cast off. On this plane that would be like the view of life that a man of business might take if he assumed that income would flow in of itself if he basked all the time in the luxuries of his home and never went back to his office. Consequences will not follow without causes being set up to provide for them. That simple truth governs spiritual progress as well as the processes of manufacture. Wood will not spontaneously convert itself into tables and chairs. The human

soul must be fashioned into shape before it can take a place—as it may do if all goes well—in the Divine Hierarchy; but, unlike the wood, it has within it the power of fashioning itself, and no external carpenter can accomplish the task, a long and sometimes a wearisome undertaking that can only be carried to a successful conclusion in the workshop. In more scientific language, physical life is the condition in which we all begin the work of educating ourselves up to Divine levels, a stupendous task, each stage of which has its own beginning. We start in some life or another on the upward journey. We make some progress which colours the super-physical period of rest and fruition, and if we persevere we get on farther next time. No one in one physical life does more than make progress. If he has set out to walk from the Land's End to the north of Scotland he cannot get over the whole distance in one day, but let him keep on day after day and he will arrive eventually. If he were allowed only one day for the journey he would not do this. The comparison is perfectly sound. If we were allowed only one life, we could never get to the summit of our possible destiny. Certainly there are aspects of progress at variance apparently with the rigidity of the statement above about the necessity of providing for it by work down here. At given stages of progress we must be in touch with super-physical planes, but the aspiration to get into touch with them must have begun here in the first instance. Thus the importance of the physical life and its opportunities cannot be over-rated, its frequent renewal is an absolute necessity—deeply embedded, so to speak, in the Divine programme of human evolution.

The methods by which reincarnations are accomplished vary within very wide limits according to the stage of development each Ego may have reached

For a few (relatively), very far on, special arrangements come into play. Dealing first with the enormous majority, including the savage and civilized races, the course of rebirth is guided—not by blind laws inherent in matter, but by the will of Beings on an immensely high level of Divine dignity, thought of by occult students as the Lords of Karma. So far as we know their collective jurisdiction extends over the whole Universe. As regards this world we know of four such Beings, each, of course, presiding over an immense hierarchy of agents. One is concerned merely—or especially—with the savage races; another with the rank and file of civilization; another with the cultured minority: these present Karmic problems of deeper intricacy than are usual with the less evolved majority. The fourth is concerned with the Karma of Nations, but that is a huge subject by itself which need not claim attention for the moment.

The simplest savage has potentialities of ultimate development towards infinity, but till his Ego has become qualified for incarnation in civilized races, almost any opportunity for renewed life in his own or some similar race will suit him equally well. His higher spiritual self is merely a germ. The identity of his personalities in each savage life could only be traced by the keenest vision of exalted clairvoyance. As a natural process the method of bringing any Ego back to physical life will be better understood if we consider the rank and file of civilization. At that level each Ego has made some progress in growing a Higher Self on the plane of spiritual consciousness. The personality in life has developed capacities of the mind, loves, friendships, and relationships which give rise to a protracted and interesting period of life on the Astral plane after physical death. This period may last for centuries, but it is the outcome of

finite causes and comes to an end. The loves and friendships do not come to an end. They are simply melting into spiritual consciousness preparatory to their renewal in a new physical-plane act of the great life drama, but when each Ego concerned has been assigned to a new and appropriate incarnation by the Divine discernment of the Lord of Karma, let us observe what happens.

An atom of matter—inconceivably minute, an atom of each plane on which human consciousness can function—clings to each personality after death. This is well understood by occult students. Such atoms are called the "permanent atoms." They pass upward during the long inter-incarnate period, and ultimately lodge in the Higher Self. When a new birth has been ordained they are projected down through the intervening planes, and the permanent physical atom lodges in the new mother. Does that seem a very feeble link with the last life on earth of the Ego concerned? If we want to understand super-physical science, we must get utterly rid of the habit of attaching importance to magnitude. An atom may put a new personality in touch with every event in the life it was identified with a thousand years previously. But we need not here plunge into a discussion of the mysteries connected with Nature's memory.

If we now turn to the case of an Ego belonging to the cultured minority of civilized races, the Higher Self, by the hypothesis, is more fully grown. Something more than in the other case clings to the permanent atoms, with the result that the astral permanent atom gathers round it (or is provided by the agents of Karma with) a temporary vehicle of astral consciousness, which strengthens the connection of the new child's body with the Ego's last personality. Let no one imagine that the new body

becomes all at once a vehicle of Ego-consciousness. For the first seven years of its life, the baby consciousness does not borrow from the presiding Astral any streak even of its mature capacity for thought and emotion. Nor even in the first seven years does it do more than accomplish (under guidance) certain preliminary processes of growth. Only when another septenary period has passed does the child, at fourteen, begin to *be* as regards its astral nature the personality of the former life over again, and not until a third septenary period has passed is it infused with the mentality of the former life. Then the Ego has been reincarnated, except for what remains on higher spiritual levels as the 'Higher Self. For, remember, we are now dealing with the case of an entity so far advanced as necessarily to have developed through many former lives a complicated account with Karma. There are good and evil forces awaiting operation. Capacities of varied kinds need expression. It may not be possible for the directing Powers to find an incarnation in which all these forces can operate simultaneously. Successive lives, surrounded with very different circumstances, may be required to work out the whole intricate problem. But the great Powers of Nature are very patient, and have limitless time at their disposal. A large draft upon those resources must be made when, in addition to the intricate claims of an advanced Ego's individual Karma, his love ties and hostile relationships with other Egos have to be provided for. But the manner in which Nature—the living mechanism of Divine Will—exhibits a power of combining everything with everything else, is for a thoughtful observer the most dazzling of her marvellous attributes.

The familiar phenomena of heredity illustrate that last remark. When a child growing up exhibits characteristics resembling those of parents or an-

cestors, he is sometimes regarded as supporting the idea that he is mentally and morally, as well as physically, the product of his parentage—a new soul. In reality the Powers guiding his incarnation have put him into a family the physical heredity of which will provide him with a body capable of giving expression to his individual characteristics. They have been able to combine that provision with a life-destiny in which his Karma can be properly worked out.

Let us now consider the peculiar conditions affecting the reincarnation of people well advanced along that " Path " of abnormal spiritual progress, leading to initiation into levels of the Divine Hierarchy which the occult student refers to when speaking of " The Masters " of Wisdom and Power. At a certain stage of such progress the Disciple, in fully conscious touch on higher planes with his own particular Master, is allowed, by the Lords of Karma, to pass, in a certain sense, out of their hands and to be guided by the Master himself into his next incarnation. By the hypothesis in such a case there has not necessarily been any exhaustion of the forces providing for long terms of happy rest on the Astral and Manasic planes. The Disciple is willing to forgo such spiritual enjoyments for the sake of getting on, returning sooner than he is obliged to the working condition of physical existence. The Master finds an appropriate opportunity for his rebirth in a family the circumstances of which will fit him all round, provide him by its physical heredity with a brain qualified to express his intellectual or artistic developments, and at the same time involve him in conditions favourable to his further spiritual progress. And the Disciple is definitely consulted in regard to the choice. Probably two or three possible incarnations are taken into consideration, and the Disciple, we may be sure, in

such cases, is *not* guided in his choice by what a mere worldly observer would regard as the relatively attractive prospect offered by such alternatives. Luxury, comfort even, in physical life is regarded from the point of view at which the Disciple is standing, in consultation with his Master, as simply of no account. The question is—which proposed life will be best calculated to promote real spiritual progress? Cases are known in which humble and arduous incarnations have been chosen in preference to others of ease and far superior social station.

The method of reincarnation in such cases will follow the ordinary routine in one way. The permanent atoms will be guided to their destination in the mother and the growing child, but the former personality is entirely complete all the time, on the Astral plane, looking on and perhaps being able to some extent to influence the parents in the treatment of the child, who will most likely exhibit psychic characteristics of an unusual order—though for various reasons this is not a matter of certainty. Eventually, by the time the child has attained the age of fourteen or a little more, and has grown a new astral body identified in appearance with the new physical body, the Astral of his former personality will be discarded and the new life will fairly begin, though it will not till later on be infused with the intellectual attributes of the Ego.

Infant prodigies are not necessarily, or even probably, examples of the peculiar incarnations just described. When wonderful musical faculties are manifest at ridiculously early ages, that condition can be traced to the impatience of the musical Ego to express itself again on the physical plane. Arithmetical prodigies may be due to some unusual capacity in the new brain for bringing over astral consciousness. But the study of such exceptional

phenomena lies outside the effort to comprehend the normal working of the laws regulating the sufficiently intricate problems of ordinary reincarnation.

The importance of understanding these laws, as far as that is possible, cannot be overrated. They lie at the root of the whole scheme of human evolution. To frame theories of human origin and destiny without taking them into account would be like trying to explain bodily growth without comprehending the circulation of the blood, to frame a science of chemistry without including oxygen in the catalogue of "elements," to explain light and sound without contemplating the idea of vibration. Religion, as the world grows wiser, will not be able to do without some comprehension of spiritual science essential to the permanent maintenance of spiritual emotion, of religion as a force operative on conduct. Without the system of rebirth, the physical world would have no *raison d'être*. If spiritual beatitude could be as well reached, without further contact with this kind of life, by the debased savage, the civilized criminal, and the altruistic philanthropist, it would not have been worth while for the Sun to shine, or the Earth to turn round. The occultist knows the physical world to be the climax of creative ingenuity. On lofty planes of consciousness Divine purposes are thought out. On those which are lower —in only one sense—they are realized. By degrees the realization becomes more and more complete, and the Earth itself will share the progress of the humanity it bears. Æons hence humanity will be contemplating the results of this progress. To part it from its heritage by denying it (in imagination; happily that cannot be done in reality) the right to keep in touch with it, is to blunder into making nonsense of the whole Divine scheme, in a way, moreover, which would incidentally cheat the loftier

planes of consciousness of the perfected Egos they are awaiting, in reliance on the plane of physical manifestation—the nursing home of our, as yet, imperfect selves. Those whom it has reared successfully are continually outgrowing the need of its guidance. Those who have hardly yet profited by this are continuously pouring in. The human family is a large one, though collectively a mere episode in Divine manifestation. But the episode is sufficiently elaborate and varied to absorb our attention, and few of its aspects are better worth notice than those which have to do with the fundamental principle governing its alternations of activity and rest, operative throughout Nature in ways innumerable—in winter and summer, in day and night, in sleeping and waking, and in our constantly renewed touch with the physical world as we descend from realms of more refined consciousness, to get on with our stupendous task of training human nature to be Divine.

# THE MASTERS AND THEIR METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

THE splendid development of the Theosophical Society all over the world has naturally given rise to an eager desire on the part of earnest Theosophists for detailed information concerning those "Elder Brethren" of Humanity whom we commonly speak of as "The Masters." At first, in the imagination of most of us, they were very mysterious entities. The Master "K. H.," of whom I was enabled to speak in the earliest books that gave the world a glimpse of "the White Lodge" (to use a conveniently comprehensive expression), remained for a long time the only one of His glorious Fraternity whose personality was in any way distinct in our thoughts.

Then we came to know about the Master "M," whose name remained partially disguised by the initial. But some of us have had touch, during the thirty-odd years that have elapsed since the Theosophical Society took root as a permanent organization, with many others of the White Lodge, and, though some reserve on the subject still seems desirable, it is thought equally desirable in another direction that earnest members of the T. S. should be able to form a clearer mental conception of the Master condition—and of the still higher levels of initiation beyond—than is provided for in current theosophical literature. I feel sure, moreover, that the Masters Themselves wish to be better understood in the Society they originated than was generally possible at first. My present purpose, therefore, is

to deal with the subject more freely than has hitherto been usual, and to show how intimately the activities of the White Lodge are blended with the affairs of the world; how the Masters are much more numerous than was at first supposed, and how They specialize in dealing with the various departments of human life, while working together in absolute harmony of purpose; how Their Divine aspect—as we regard Them from our point of view—is blended with an intensely human aspect as They deal with us individually, and how They, in turn, are guided in Their action by the still loftier Will above.

We cannot overrate Their power and knowledge if we compare it with our own, nor can we overrate Their limitation if we endeavour, in imagination, to range the highest planes of consciousness in which supreme Divine law prevails. Again, we cannot easily do justice to Their affectionate sympathy with human disciples struggling upwards towards loftier spiritual life. In that way Their human aspect is beautifully manifest.

The Master level of initiation is a fairly definite stage on the path of spiritual progress, but is in no sense a halting place. The next great stage (initiations beyond common comprehension intervening) is that of the " Fathers," as they are called (or by an equivalent term in another tongue). And I am assured, though the idea is utterly beyond incarnate understanding, that the interval, as representing power, knowledge, and cosmic experience, between the condition of the Master and that of the Father is not less than that between an ordinary cultured man of our race and the Master. Within recent years there have been many ascents from the Master to the Father level, but in no way does any such ascent cut off the new Father from the disciple's activities and personal attachments of Himself when in the Master condition. From our point of view He is the Master

still, so in thinking of Those we may know we need not be curious concerning Their absolute rank in the Mighty Hierarchy.

A simple fact not generally known throughout the Society is this: there is a Master definitely identified with, or, in charge of, every great country or nationality in the world. Thus I have had some touch with an English, a Scotch, and an Irish Master; also with an American Master, indeed, with more than one specializing in the Guardianship of the United States. I know also of an Italian and a French Master, and in all such cases the Master in question, though He may have held that rank for untold ages, and may have used many physical bodies in the past, takes incarnation in a body belonging to the nation or race over which He undertakes to preside. He generally resides at the capital of that State, and this custom disposes of an absurd notion, prevalent among Theosophists at one time when the Master condition was very imperfectly understood, to the effect that no "adept" could endure the evil magnetism of great cities. In some cases—and we happened to hear of them first—certain Masters have found it convenient, so far as Their bodies are concerned, to reside in remote Himalayan districts. Their work has lain altogether on higher planes, and all about the world, under conditions involving the habitual use of subtler vehicles of consciousness, but They can, and sometimes do, materialize in the midst of crowded humanity. He would be a poor "Adept" who could not shield Himself from inferior magnetic influences.

Obviously, by the laws governing the occult world, national Masters cannot let Themselves be known to ordinary people round Them for what They really are. It is perfectly hopeless for anyone not of their own order to try and identify Them.

In order to guard against possible confusion of thought on the part of my readers, let me remind them that of course there is a being of the Deva order also identified with each great nationality, but he is on a different line of evolution altogether.

During happier periods of the past there was a German Master, or more than one, but since Satan has monopolized spiritual influence in Germany, the White Lodge Masters have had to withdraw from that country. The resulting condition of things could only be elucidated by a long collateral story into which I have no time to diverge.

One Master, whose work lies chiefly in America, has been especially active in helping to guard the transport ships carrying United States troops to France, from torpedo attacks on the way. The black and white forces on the higher planes are each, all the time, trying to bend physical forces to their own ends, and the way in which, throughout this war, the powers of the whole White Lodge have been strained in resisting the Satanic attack, is ill understood as yet by the humanity that owes its escape from the fatal disaster to that tireless protection. The Master to whom I have just been referring has been identified with the American continent ever since it was part of the still greater continent of Atlantis. He is linked, in a very curious way, with the Atlantean period. And this leads me to speak on one condition associated with Mastership that seems at first very bewildering. The physical bodies of the Masters often attain to extraordinary ages, to be counted by centuries, rather than by years. No incomprehensible miracle is really involved.

During our youth we are all under the influence of a force science has not yet catalogued, which makes for growth and improvement. When we are grown up it continues in operation for a time, keeping the

body in good working order. Then, in the natural course of life at this stage of evolution, that force ceases to affect us. Old age sets in, etc., etc. The Masters *understand* that force, among Their own intellectual acquirements, and can turn it on or off at will. As long as it is turned on Their bodies do not show any sign of age. They may discard one body and take another sometimes for reasons connected with Their work, but They are not under any natural obligations to do so.

It is well for ordinary humanity that they do not know how to perpetuate physical life. At this stage of our development our bodies are not worth perpetuation, while, if we make the best good use of them for about the usual time, the Karmic law will give us better ones for our next physical lives.

Masters not definitely linked with particular nations may range the world at large, dealing with its needs as they fall within the scope of Their speciality. Thus, one Master, who has been so freely spoken of that it would be affectation to avoid using His name—the Count St. Germain—has been busy in Russia ever since the revolution broke out, trying to mitigate its hideous development—with poor success hitherto, I think He would be first to admit. It is a mistake to suppose that He has only attained the Master level in this life. I believe He has been on that level for ages gone by, but He has been taking partial incarnation for the past few centuries. These have been traced back through the latest—Francis Bacon—to various personalities distinguished during the Middle Ages. The mystery is a little beyond common comprehension, but that series of lives, though certainly a continuous series, never absorbed more than a part of the great Spiritual Master in the background. I am assured that there was about a third of Him in Francis Bacon—a very magnificent

incarnation all the same. Many Masters work in this way. Indeed, on a level a little below that of a Master, the arrangement is practicable. And a Master, if He sees fit, can run, so to speak, more than one body at the same time. This makes the identification of any particular Master on the physical plane a matter of extreme difficulty.

We ought to understand this possibility more fully. Masters will sometimes, for special reasons, take incarnation on some very humble human level. I know of one deeply impressive case. To fulfil some purpose of the White Lodge, a certain Master (not to be identified with any hitherto referred to in Theosophical literature) took birth as a slave in Rome during the Domitian period. It ultimately came to pass that he was driven into the arena of the Coliseum in company with a crowd of Christians, to be devoured by wild beasts. Being what He was, He could, of course, have slipped out of His body as easily as any of us might take off a coat, and would not have been at all inconvenienced by leaving it a prey for the lions. But He saw that by staying on in it, and using His power as a Master to pacify the agonized apprehensions of the crowd around Him, He could save *them* from the worst sufferings of the ordeal. So He remained, and (here we touch another mystery) by drawing into Himself the vibrations of fear from others, actually felt himself the intense pain of these vibrations. He allowed Himself to be consciously killed by a lion.

This is not the only story of the kind I could quote, but it ought to be enough to show the utter selflessness ("unselfish" is an inadequate word) that is one of the sublime attributes of the Master condition. For me, I have always regarded the arena incident as constituting the most wonderful lesson in occult ethics I have ever received.

The Master K. H., to whom I especially belong, is pre-eminently concerned with the spiritual progress of humanity. That is why we find Him the lofty influence peculiarly connected with the Theosophical Society. In Atlantean ages He was generally to be found exercising exalted priestly functions, while His great "brother" M. (specializing in Power) was generally at such times incarnated as a great King or Emperor. Another Master—"H." will serve to identify Him—is, amongst other specialities, in charge of the movement known as Spiritualism. He has been in charge of it since its inception, and before, for it was deliberately planned by the Great White Lodge collectively to control the growing materialism of the nineteenth century. It was, as definitely as Theosophy, a White Lodge Movement, of which Theosophy was planned to be the natural sequel. In view of this state of things, the mutual antagonism on this plane of Spiritualism and Theosophy is pitiably ludicrous. Spiritualists, refusing to believe in the Masters and Their teachings, are fighting against their own illustrious Chief. Theosophists, scoffing at Spiritualism, are insulting the wise policy of the White Lodge they profess to revere!

Again, it is foolish to overlook the splendid work in the world spiritualists have done in convincing millions that there is another plane of existence, another life after this; and it is marvellously foolish of spiritualists to spurn the gift of fuller knowledge concerning that plane and life offered them by Theosophy.

Spiritualism should have been the natural highway leading to Theosophy, if the relation of the two had not been grievously mismanaged on this plane in the beginning.

Certain members of the Great White Lodge, on a very high level, are concerned with the progress of

the world in connection with science, literature, and art. The scientific "Master" (a higher designation would be more suitable) is the channel through Whom all new discovery and invention (of dignified kind) naturally flows. He inspires discovery at the appropriate times. In the whole Divine programme great blocks of natural knowledge are marked out for dissemination on the physical plane at definite periods. Discovery is never allowed to outrun these Divine limitations. It may overtake them, for the Master A. (let us call Him) does not use men of science as automata or telephones. He watches the drift of their researches, may, indeed, prompt these, and then implants in some receptive mind a new idea along that line of investigation. That does not in the least detract from the merit of the incarnate discoverer. He could never have picked up the inspiration unless he had developed his Ego capacity to the required degree of perfection.

I know less about the way in which the artistic Masters work, and will not attempt to describe it.

What I have written is but an imperfect sketch of the conceptions I have been able to form of the Masters and Their work, during the thirty-odd years I have been in touch with Them, never more closely than now. But at the best on this plane of consciousness we can only get a feeble grasp of some of the features of the White Lodge life. In its higher aspects the mere physical brain cannot deal with its conditions.

If the only purpose that the Masters had in view, when beginning to give some of us "instruction" in certain occult mysteries, had been our instruction, in the literal sense of the word, their method would undeniably have been open to criticism. They set us no lessons to learn; they merely indicated a willingness to answer questions if these did not seek in-

formation of a kind They were forbidden to disclose. If we imagine that system adopted in physical plane schools a boy desirous of learning arithmetic would fare as follows: " What do you want to know ?" the master would ask. The boy, utterly ignorant of where to begin, might say, " I have seen a queer mark in arithmetic books. Looks like a V with a line at one end. What does it mean ?" The master would say, " That is the sign of a square root, and it means the figure which multiplied by itself would give the figure you see." The boy might put away that piece of information for future use, but ignorant, so far, of multiplication, would not all at once be much wiser.

Without being a gross caricature of the facts that is the way we—for in the beginning I worked with a friend who afterwards dropped out of the Theosophical movement—obtained the instruction that ultimately led to the production of *Esoteric Buddhism*. On the face of things, looking back, it really does seem absurd. We felt that we were in close touch with almost infinite wisdom and knowledge, and we plunged into some of the most enormous problems of human evolution. " How did humanity originate ?" (We got a clue to the existence of other worlds besides this.) " What other worlds ?" (We got a clue to the planetary chain.) We asked innumerable questions about it. We wanted to know how to become a Master. Got very little satisfaction along that line of inquiry. So on, and so on. Really, looking back, I am surprised I did not make a worse hash of the teaching than my earliest book is responsible for. Why was all this thus ?

Firstly, there seems to be a settled habit in the occult world defining teaching as a response to inquiry. Our method is so different, because for the most part instruction has to be rammed into unwilling

pupils. There are no unwilling pupils in the occult world, and knowledge is most firmly implanted when it comes in response to a definite desire for knowledge.

Secondly, the purpose of the Masters in making the great Theosophical experiment was not to put the world into possession of occult knowledge, but to train those who proved qualified by developing appropriate aspiration to become like the Masters morally, as far as possible, so that they might ascend the path of spiritual progress. Some glimpses of the intellectual delights attending such progress might be held out—had to be held out, or the experiment was bound to fail. The Masters had a very delicate task to perform at first, in deciding how much knowledge to give out along the line of this idea; how resolutely to withhold knowledge that might be misused. My own beloved Chief, who amongst other attributes is the embodied essence of human kindliness, has told me how he used to sympathize with my annoyance when He had to refuse to answer some of my questions. The time came when the motive for such refusals was much less operative. That change accounts for the way in which, during the last ten or fifteen years, I have been able to expand the original teaching (or what passed for it) enormously, with the very curious result that a good many theosophical students poring over the earlier books, the Secret Doctrine especially, cling to the impressions derived from those earlier books, and resent the idea of having them enlarged or, perhaps, in some cases, corrected.

It really did not matter at first whether people had correct or incorrect notions about planetary chains, manvantaras, root races, and their periods; of elemental nature, or the condition of the world in earlier rounds. It was important that they should

get something like a clear idea of the way in which the Divine Hierarchy—represented for us by our Elder Brethren, whom we now call the Masters—brooded always over the world's welfare, and held out Their hands to all worthy aspirants eager, or capable of growing eager, to join that splendid fraternity.

Why did that first book, *Esoteric Buddhism*, start the Theosophical movement in the Western world as, in effect, it did? Because it made people think of the Masters, and gave Them an opportunity of thinking back, thus pouring an extremely important influence into the world. A deep occult truth underlies that idea. No one gets direct personal notice or guidance from the Masters unless he looks up to Them consciously in search of it, in the first instance. He cannot do this unless he knows something about them to guide his thoughts. The earliest book gave multitudes a hint of Their existence; made the readers *think* of the Masters, however vaguely. This gave them Their opportunity. They shed back influences upon those who thought of Them. Few of us have, even now, more than a very imperfect conception of thought as a power. The thoughts that flew back and forward among readers of the earlier books gave rise to the Theosophical Society. A long time elapsed before the Higher Powers felt sure that it would last. Many people imagine that it was founded in 1875. Look back to the first volume of *Isis Unveiled* (p. 12 of the Introduction), and reconsider that impression. It was not until nearly ten years later that the Society began to excite real interest in the Western world, and nearly another ten years elapsed before it was so firmly rooted that the Masters could regard it as an accomplished fact. In the interval between the early eighties and the early nineties it went through

vicissitudes that almost killed it outright, but it survived them, and its life became assured.

Then it was that restrictions, frightfully in my way at first, faded away. Certainly the Masters could not even then give out to the world at large what are called the secrets of initiation, but, as far as pure knowledge of natural law, the course of human evolution, the conditions of other worlds and their relations with our own, the details of super-physical schemes in relation to rebirth, after-death experiences, progress on the Path, etc., etc., all these subjects were thrown open to our inquiries, and the result has been the enormous expansion of our knowledge exhibited in writings some of us have been able to put forth during the last dozen years.

A great deal of important teaching came through during the latter end of the critical period before the restrictions above referred to were altogether swept away. The years from 1885 to about 1902 were remarkable years in connection with instruction from the Masters. The early London Lodge included during those years a good many earnest and qualified students, among them Mr. Leadbeater and Mrs. Besant. And I had the advantage of touch with my own Master through an appropriate channel. The long series of *London Lodge Transactions* which appeared during those years will be seen, by anyone who looks back, to be milestones on the road leading to the state of theosophical knowledge at the end of the period they covered. All they contained has long since been absorbed into theosophical literature. Only for those who may care to trace the history of our teaching can they have an interest now. The new series of *London Lodge Transactions*, beginning in 1913, are on a different footing. They have to do with later corrections and additions to the earlier teaching obtained in very recent years.

This light sketch of the history of our theosophical education will, perhaps, help to make some embarrassments intelligible. Few students can be in constant touch with every fragment of theosophical information that finds its way into print, and though some of us are keenly interested in Occult Science—knowledge, that is to say, of super-physical Nature and its marvellous machinery of law—that interest is by no means felt with the same intensity by all. The Masters, in my opinion, would be the last people to wish that it should be the main object of pursuit for members of the Society in general.

And yet that cannot be attained without some appreciation of the great Divine scheme of which we are a part.

It is desirable that all should absorb as much as they conveniently can of the magnificent Occult Science that explains our place in Nature and the possibilities of our future growth. Broad, vague impressions on these subjects are, however, enough to give colour and meaning, so to speak, to efforts we may all make toward living up to the ethical teachings from the Master level, the comprehension of which puts no strain on even the most humble estimate we can form of our intellectual capacity.

## EXPANDED THEOSOPHICAL KNOWLEDGE

FIRST I propose to deal with the great mystery of Consciousness, one which at the first glance seems the most unfathomable of any we have to study; then to set forth, in fuller detail than has hitherto been found possible, the actual present condition of human life on the planetary chain to which we belong, and thirdly, to show how our comprehension of the realm immediately in touch with the physical life, though just beyond its boundaries, the Astral world, has been developed to an extent that we never attempted to reach when Theosophical study thirty-five years ago was mainly directed towards still wider horizons.

### I.—THE NATURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Consciousness is recognized by all physiological students as a mystery they do not attempt to explain. We can trace the activities of life back through the muscles and the nerves, back to the brain, but whence came the original impulses in obedience to which the brain set the nerves to work on the muscles? That question is left aside as relating to a mystery beyond human understanding. Nor shall I attempt to clear up the mystery in the way we can sometimes accomplish this when dealing with purely physical phenomena; we must be content to treat Consciousness as the fundamental Divine Principle of all manifestation, but the illuminating idea which I want to convey, is that Divine Consciousness, itself, *is*, in its nature, identical with any consciousness of which we can take

cognizance; that in a word there is only one kind of Consciousness in all creation—the Consciousness of God, working through vehicles of varying capacity. Limited as we feel our own consciousness to be, it is in its nature identical with that of Infinite Divinity, as in the other direction with that of animal and even vegetable life. That which may be thought of as the efficient value of consciousness depends upon the vehicle in which it is working. Within the body of a sheep its limitations are narrow indeed, within that of an enlightened human being they seem enormously widened; but whether we go down in thought far below the sheep level, or ascend in imagination far above the human condition, we shall find that the vehicle of consciousness in all cases determines the extent to which consciousness itself can range over the infinitude of knowledge.

When Darwin first started the evolutionary theory, some of us were inclined to regard him as having made the mistake of concerning himself with vehicles alone, ignoring the concurrent evolution of intellectual and spiritual capacity. Without, perhaps, fully realizing the magnitude of his own achievement, he was embracing in his view of nature both the physical and super-physical processes of evolution. Although by profound study the process can be comprehended even at the level of its obscure beginnings, the principle is better grasped if we confine our attention to the development of consciousness in the human being. By what law is the gradual improvement of the vehicle as time goes on provided for? Putting the answer in a brief phrase, susceptible of further development in detail, the law is that when consciousness within any given vehicle exerts itself to the utmost, or in other words, makes the best use of the vehicle in which it finds itself at any given time, the law—really a part of the great aggregation of

Karmic laws—proceeds to invest that volume of consciousness, that Ego, with a better vehicle for its next physical manifestation.

I must here quote a line or two from Tennyson, whose poetry, as we grow to appreciate it, is saturated with occult knowledge. He writes in one fragment to be found in almost the last published volume of his works:—

> The Lord let the house of a brute to the soul of a man;
> And man said, "Am I Your debtor?"
> The Lord—"Not yet; but make it as clean as you can,
> And then I will let you a better."

In these compact lines we have the whole idea I want to convey suggested, if not elaborately expressed. "Make it as clean as you can" means, of course, make the best use of it, and establish a Karmic claim on an improved house or vehicle. We see the system working as we study the principles of Reincarnation, working, of course, like most processes in Nature in what seems at the first glance a lopsided fashion. The lover of music makes the best use of his musical faculties in the life when that desire first governs him, and, while perhaps neglecting other possibilities of improvement, he obtains in his next life a vehicle better adapted to the expression of musical thought. So with any other line of human activity. The lover of physical science finds life after life his capacity for comprehending the laws of physical nature ever and ever improving; the philanthropist, unconsciously to himself, is imbuing his permanent atoms with an ever-increasing eagerness to benefit his fellow-creatures. Down to the minor developments of intellectual capacity, the study of mathematics or philology, the same invariable principle may be discerned. No one can in one life clean all the rooms in his house—to follow Tennyson's metaphor; but by degrees all in turn will be found to have

claimed his attention, with the ultimate result that the Ego acquires a vehicle of consciousness perfected beyond the needs of commonplace life, and passes into the ranks of Those we know something of, the Masters of Wisdom.

As one burst of sunshine may illumine a landscape previously obscured by shadow, this simple idea seems to clear up whole realms of vague speculation concerning the processes we commonly refer to by the vague term "evolution." And by the light so shed on the whole subject, we begin to put a scientific face upon a vast range of cloudy speculation embodied sometimes in the phrase "The Immanence of God in Nature." Imagination, of course, reaches out vaguely towards the supreme problem: What is the nature of the vehicle within which Divine Consciousness works? and in that direction, at present, at all events, it is useless for us to aspire. But fully appreciated, the present interpretation of consciousness gives unity and meaning to the whole design of creation from mineral manifestation upward through organized life to infinitudes beyond. It will be found to harmonize with every great idea that Theosophical thought has been endeavouring to deal with. A compact phrase I have often been fond of quoting rests in its significance on the principle I have been endeavouring to define: "Whatever is, is, has been, or will be, human." At the first glance the value of the phrase seems to reside in the promise it holds forth that all human creatures may aspire in thinking of the possibilities that await them towards absolute infinitudes of glorified existence; and it does that, but it puts, so to speak, a scientific face upon the magnificent prospect, and it fits in with every idea we have been taught to work with concerning the dependence of progress on individual exertion. No one is lifted to a loftier level of being than that on

which he finds himself at any given moment, by any Power exterior to himself. Helped by suggestion! Yes, we may all welcome such help as that; we can none of us dispense with it; but the suggestion must in all cases be a hint pointing to individual exertion. Actual progress in every case must be the product of individual will and effort, the effort to make the maximum use of life's opportunities; or, in other words, of the vehicle in which consciousness for the time being is working.

Hardly any of the misty thoughts in which old-fashioned psychology indulged will remain clouded by vagueness when the principle I am dealing with gives them definite shape.

I will venture on a subtle illustration of this idea. Thinkers who rather resent than aspire to clearly defined knowledge concerning the spiritual aspect of their own nature, are often fond of treating Christ as a state of consciousness. "The awakening of the Christ within us," or some such vague interpretation of the idea, is held preferable to any specific knowledge concerning the levels in the Divine Hierarchy at which we find definitely in manifestation a Being from whom the Christ Principle actually emanates. Attached as many thinkers are to the cloudiness of mysticism, the recognition of such a specific Being seems to them to degrade the idea, and yet with the knowledge concerning the Divine Hierarchy that has been in Theosophical possession almost since the beginning, we know that there is a specific Being at a certain level within the Divine Hierarchy of the Solar System, to whom we may definitely look up as the conscious source of all spiritual influence. This clear knowledge, far from degrading the aspiration in each individual Ego to comprehend spirituality, is just as superior to the state of mind with which the mystic is content, as the

landscape illuminated by sunshine is superior to the dim suggestion of partial obscurity. Undoubtedly in all research or teaching connected with spiritual truth mysteries still lie beyond any that are being by degrees cleared up—stretching beyond these to all Infinity; but the more our knowledge is expanded, the better we realize that cloudiness of thought, uncertainty as we gaze upward, vagueness of expression as we attempt to put aspiration into words, are merely due to want of further knowledge. As definite and precise as our knowledge has now become in reference to the simple phenomena of chemistry, so defined and precise to a higher understanding must the conditions of spiritual life ultimately become, though to the ordinary human brain they must long remain incomprehensible. There is no inherent value in cloudiness of thought. That which we ought all to be aiming at in dealing with any of the mysteries hitherto embraced by the vague term "occultism" is clearness and precision of understanding. The Truth, if we could comprehend it, is as clear and precise as any of those simpler truths of nature within our grasp, and the task before us is not that of continuing to treat spiritual research as something too sacred to be cramped by outline or form. There can be no spiritual truth so exalted and for us at the moment incomprehensible, which does not have as clear an outline and as defined a mental shape for consciousness working in appropriate vehicles as the simpler relationships of molecular physics already have for ourselves.

### 2.—The Planetary Chain

The first idea we had about the progress of life on planetary chains was, looking back upon it, all we could be expected to understand at the first blush. It was a huge expansion of the elementary idea that

this world was the beginning of all things, and that its gradual creation could be traced in the familiar language of scripture.

The very notion of planetary chains was an entirely new one which had to be assimilated by degrees, and has needed in later years very elaborate explanation. The planetary chain that we belong to consists, as the early teaching showed, of seven globes, the first and last, on the Manasic level, two others below these on the Astral level, three on the physical plane. We jumped to the conclusion in the beginning that all planetary chains were alike, consisting of seven globes, and the idea has unhappily permeated Theosophical literature to that extent that it has misled many thinkers. It is really only the middle chain of a manvantaric series that consists of seven planets; in the previous Manvantara a chain had only five; in the one before it, only three; and in the one before that, only one. I will not stop to work out this idea in all its scientific beauty. A mere hint will be enough to show how the whole series of Manvantaras is a harmonious conception beginning with the Divine Thought—the first Manasic globe—culminating in some supreme results that are beyond our present comprehension in that far-away future when the whole series will be complete. But keeping our attention fixed for the moment on our present planetary chain of seven globes, the first idea we have to realize is that, when we were told in the beginning about the great life wave sweeping on from world to world, and for the present occupying this earth, we were put in possession of a broad idea which is perfectly true, but which requires elaboration. The *main part* of the human family to which we belong does occupy this earth at the present time, but during the various rounds of progress which have been going on for an almost incalculable past, the family has

to a certain extent straggled over the whole series of worlds constituting the Chain. At present we shall find it impossible to understand the conditions of life on the super-physical planets, and we may leave them out of account for the moment; but on the three physical, including Mars behind us and Mercury in advance of us, the human family is now distributed —part of it already established on Mercury, part left behind on Mars. The explanation is simple. While the great majority swept forward to this earth, the laggard remnant not yet qualified for incarnation here remains on the planet Mars, a superior vanguard already getting forward to the planet in advance. The retarded condition of the Martian remnant—counted, of course, by a fairly large number of millions—consists of those who have (reverting to my former explanation about consciousness) failed to make the exertions required for the acquisition of superior vehicles. There is no vehicle of human consciousness on this earth amongst even the lowest savages that is not definitely superior in some important ways to the vehicles of consciousness now inhabiting Mars. Strange to say, as often happens on the downward arc, some capacities are still active amongst them, which enable them to do things that we ourselves, in spite of our superior development, are unable to accomplish. The Martian people can handle matter by arts that we, to a certain extent, have lost, though the use of such arts does not represent superior intelligence any more than a spider's capacity to make a web that no human art could imitate, represents intellectual superiority on the part of the spider. Morally, the condition of the Martian people is below any level that we can easily comprehend. Their forms are to our more cultivated taste grotesquely ugly, and they practically exemplify a saying applied with less appropriateness to some savage

races of our own globe: "manners they have none, and their customs are beastly." The animal life on Mars is at a low level, corresponding to that of the people. It is purely reptilian in its character, and the development of taste amongst the people may be imagined from the fact that their food consists of the blood of the reptiles swarming in the vast inland lakes commonly called canals, with which the habitable portions of the planet are covered.

Even amongst the Martians the evolutionary law which presses gradually on the multitude is slowly working. Some Egos—for already the Martians must be thought of as human—gradually establish claims on a better vehicle of consciousness than those around them, and then they become qualified for incarnation on this earth, and are brought over under the guidance of appropriate emissaries from the White Lodge in batches sometimes of fairly considerable number. I have heard of a recent case in which within the last year or two, a batch of about a hundred thousand Martian Egos were imported into this world, finding incarnation, some of them, in the aborigines, as they are called, of Australia, some in the lowest types of Central Africa, the best of them amongst the populations of Central Asia.

The conditions on the other hand involving the premature migration of Egos from this earth to Mercury are curious and interesting when understood, but at this step of the explanation it will be more convenient to stop and take a new departure having to do with the relations of the various planetary systems or chains of our Solar System with one another.

Even in the first sketches of occult teaching, as soon as the notion of the planetary chain had been established in the mind, it became clear that Egos evolving around any given planetary chain, granting

free will to each, must work out different destinies. Some Egos would advance more rapidly than others, so that at a fairly advanced stage in the whole process there would be immense intervals of conditions between those in the vanguard and those in the rear. Then it was explained that at a certain stage in the development of any given planetary chain some would have fallen so far back, as compared with their more persevering companions, that physical progress for the best would have advanced to a condition in which the worst would not be qualified to make use of the forms then in process of development. In other words, and in the rougher language of our first explanations, a period is inevitable in each planetary scheme when those who cannot advance farther drop off from the main current of evolution, only those who have made better use of their opportunities reaching onwards towards the final possibilities of their existence. This period used to be spoken of as the critical period of the fifth Round, and for a long time no information reached us as to what would be the final destiny, in the case of our own planetary scheme, of those who would fall off from evolution at that remote period far ahead of us, the middle of the Round destined to succeed that with which we are at present concerned.

Later information filled up this gap in our knowledge, and in so doing threw a flood of light upon the constitution of the Solar System as a whole. Obviously the senior planetary scheme, of which Venus is the physical world, has long since passed that critical period, although for us it lies so far still in the future. Already the course of events must have decided the fate of the failures of Venus at the critical period, and the answer given me, when I was eventually enabled to put the question, at once showed how various planetary chains of the Solar System are not to be

regarded as entirely independent undertakings. They are linked together in an extremely intelligible fashion by the fact that the Egos who become the failures of one planetary scheme pass into the evolution of the planetary scheme next in order of development; so the simple answer to the question, "Where are the failures of the Venus scheme?" is embodied in the one word, "Here!" Certainly, in my own experience, no one word ever before threw such light on vast regions of speculation. One saw the whole seven (or rather ten) planetary schemes, all forming part of one coherent design; one saw the reason why they were not all at this moment in similar stages of progress; one could look forward to the time when, for example, the planet Jupiter, now an incandescent mass of mineral matter, will become an inhabited home of future races, when those which inhabit our earth will no longer number among them any beings of a less exalted spiritual rank than those we now think of as the Masters, and when the future Jupiter evolution will afford opportunities for a new beginning to those who may have dropped out of the evolutionary course designed in connection with later developments of this world.

Now we come back to the further details of the process. The Venus failures are here; more precisely, what does that mean? In truth, although failures from the present standpoint of Venus attainment, they failed at a period in the evolution of their own race already far in advance of that reached by the great bulk of our own people. None of them could be content with such incarnations as are offered to humanity at present, even by the most civilized races inhabiting this world, or, at all events, no such offers can be provided in anything resembling adequate abundance. The problem as thus stated almost hints at its own solution. I have already said that the

planet Mercury, belonging to our chain, is actually the home of Egos constituting the vanguard of our humanity. For the moment I am leaving out of account those who, along the Path, attain sublime spiritual conditions which, for that matter, make them free of all the planets of our chain. But Mercury, inhabited by the very best, so to speak, of the human family, became a region in which the Venus failures could freely incarnate, and at the present moment "Mercury" is the more precise form of the word "here," which impressed me so much when I first heard it used in this connection.

And now let us realize more in detail the nature of the life of which Mercury is the home. In many ways it is so far superior to the conditions we are familiar with here, that only by degrees can we form any conception of it. In some respects we are helped to do this by a book which, at the first glance, has nothing whatever to do with scientific occultism—Bulwer Lytton's delightful story, *The Coming Race*. We do not go far in occult study before coming into touch with the frequent occurrence of literary inspiration. Masters taking an interest in that work, and finding sensitive authorship, will constantly inspire poetry and fiction, while others, indeed, are inspiring scientific thought; but that need not be dealt with at this moment. The Master who inspired Bulwer Lytton with the ideas so prettily set forth in *The Coming Race* did not, so to speak, give Himself the trouble to invent an imaginary world of dignity and beauty; He simply drew on His personal knowledge of the conditions actually prevailing on the planet Mercury—conditions absolutely familiar, not merely to the great Masters, but to many of those of somewhat lesser rank, who are already able, on the Buddhic plane, to roam the Solar System at discretion. Perfect harmony prevails in the delightful Mercurial

community; the Satanic influence which has filled this world with strife and confusion, whether we contemplate political, industrial, or international relationships, has never penetrated the peaceful regions of our beautiful sister planet. Intellectual advancement has far outstripped our own, and for many thinkers amongst us speculating on the possibilities of future sociology, it will be interesting to know that in reality on Mercury, as in Bulwer Lytton's story, the female half of humanity is distinctly, though in no inconvenient degree, superior to and predominant over the other half. It is difficult to make the statement in any form of words which does not convey at the first glance a misunderstanding, because the very words male and female, as we use them here, have very different meanings on Mercury, especially from the physiological point of view from those we attach to the words in this less beautiful world. And, again, when we talk of superiority and predominance, we can hardly keep touch with ideas that seem from our experience incompatible with those others—the ideas of perfect harmony and love. Really all these apparently conflicting principles are susceptible of combination in a perfect chord like varying notes in music, and the whole subject tempts imagination. But for the moment I must revert to the connection between Mercury conditions and the claims on nature of the Venus failures.

In its later evolution, possibly in obedience to a law which may govern other worlds, the people of Venus became very much more advanced students of beauty—among other things—than we on this world can claim to be as yet. That drift of development was already operative with the whole race before the critical period. So, as a matter of fact, Venus failures now on Mercury are enormously in advance of the earthly population, as a whole, as regards the appre-

ciation of beauty on a level only represented amongst us, if at all, by the greatest artists of our period. Parenthetically I may here just mention a bit of information that reached me a long time ago, and seemed puzzling at the moment, concerning the peculiar Karma which, in some cases, makes it possible for Earthly Egos to be prematurely transferred to incarnations on Mercury (I am not talking about the inner round, which is a subject apart). It is just possible for people appropriately qualified by their Karma to be thus transferred. I must not stop to go into the numerous details of the subject, but one characteristic required by people unconsciously becoming qualified for the transfer, is the artistic temperament. They must have some qualification for appropriately enjoying the heredity of Mercurial parents.

This whole department of the subject is curiously fascinating. Of course, the word "beauty" must not be used in any narrow sense, but in one which includes the natural beauty of trees and flowers, the loveliness of colour in a landscape, the harmony of form in a structure, as well as that beauty in the feminine aspect of humanity which is perhaps the variety of beauty we all think of first when we make use of the word.

As above suggested, not quite all the Venus failures are already established on Mercury. Some, if not actually amongst us yet, are awaiting earthly incarnation, due, no doubt, to their exact place on the scale of evolution, and are meanwhile, from higher levels either on the Astral or Manasic worlds, influencing artistic thought, inspiring artistic achievement actually in progress amongst us at the present time, and this has been going on over what we are in the habit of thinking of as long periods; short, of course, as measured on the scale of natural evolu-

tion. The whole outburst of artistic capacity in Greece during that period the other day which we call "ancient" was due to the way in which Venus failures in our higher worlds discerned in that race great capacities for the reception of their influence. Roughly speaking, all Greek art in sculpture may be regarded as having been a gift to us from the Venus immigrants, whom, from the Venus point of view, we must still speak of as failures.

There is something eminently suggestive in the fact that a more highly evolved, more morally and intellectually perfect a race than our own, at its present stage, should also be identified with beauty for that matter, not merely in regard to capacity to appreciate it, but in actual manifestation. Looking back far to the rear of our own place in evolution, we always find early forms, more or less to our senses, ugly and repulsive. The forms, indeed, of the degraded remnants of the human family on Mars are simply hideous, as compared with the best examples among us. The animal life there is uncouth and repulsive as compared with the animal life of this world. Doubtless there are exceptions that will leap into consciousness for everyone who thinks on the subject, but very broadly the law of nature appears to link the moral improvement of conscious beings with corresponding improvement in the beauty of form. When we understand the intricacies of Karma better than we do at present, it may be possible to find out why men and women amongst us are sometimes conspicuous at the same time for beauty of form and atrociously defective character. But exceptions without, according to the stupid proverb, "proving the rule," are at all events compatible with its operation on a large scale.

And one more suggestion in connection with this line of thought arises from definite information about

the people on Mercury. Without going into indecorous detail, it is enough to say that the birth of children is absolutely unattended with distress or inconvenience for the mother. The whole business of race propagation is in point of fact so unlike our own, so infinitely more charming and attractive to the imagination, that incidentally it must mean differences in the physical conformation of men and women which may, at the first glance, seem to conflict with our present conceptions of perfect female beauty. And yet I am assured by one, at all events, in a position to form an opinion, that, without for a moment denying the beauty of a perfect female form of our kind at present, the perfect Mercury woman, though very different, is the more beautiful of the two. The perception of beauty is a faculty that grows and changes in its growth, and this thought reaches in both directions, so that when I have sometimes sought to ascertain why Nature's early experiments in form have generally been uncouth and ugly, I have been told they were neither from the point of view of the lowly developed consciousness they were designed to express.

### 3.—The Astral World

Any reference to the real conditions of astral life must bring us first of all into touch with a situation —as lamentable as it is ludicrous—that has established an almost impassable chasm between the vast body of super-physical inquirers engaged with the methods of spiritualism, and those who have appreciated what with all respect to the other I cannot but describe as the infinitely more important line of study identified with the Theosophical movement. One might laboriously trace the way mistakes were made in the beginning, but as regards authentic teaching from the Masters, on the strength of which the Theosophical

movement was launched, the subject of astral life immediately following the death of the physical body was simply neglected. Somehow we were drifted in the beginning into concerning ourselves with the gigantic principles governing human evolution on a large scale, and disregarded opportunities of understanding our immediate future better than before, in a way which painfully reminds one of the old story about the star-gazer who fell into the ditch. The pity of it, looking back, is intense. The Theosophical movement ought to have been recruited wholesale from the ranks of the spiritualists. As things have turned out, it is only a few who can be drawn across the gulf dividing most of them from loftier work.

But now, forgetting all this, let us turn to the accurate information which in later years some of us have been able to obtain from lofty sources of information concerning that astral world which thirty or forty years ago the spiritualists understood better than the first writers on Theosophy, but which now we are able to examine and interpret to an extent which puts the knowledge acquired by the ordinary methods of spiritualism in the background altogether.

To survey the astral world in its entirety and to comprehend its manifold varieties of condition, the survey must be on an altogether higher level of consciousness than that of the normal inhabitants. This idea, which is obvious as soon as stated, is ignored altogether by spiritualists of the simpler type, who imagine that because their friend has passed to a new state of existence he must know, not merely all about it, but all that relates to human destinies beyond his own condition. And many spiritualists will even accept negative testimony; a spirit who quite truly says that he cannot perceive any rein-

carnations in progress is held by his friend on this plane to have proved that no reincarnations take place; but in thus indicating the necessary imperfection of the spiritualistic method as a means of acquiring knowledge, let me, before passing on to deal with the knowledge acquired in other ways, bear testimony to the magnificent work that has been done in the world by spiritualism in its relations with religious thinking. The growth of materialistic belief in the middle of the last century was so powerful that, if entirely unchecked, it would probably have extinguished religious thinking altogether. Spiritualism, by proving that there was another life after this, and one with which we could get into touch, broke up the domination of the materialistic school in a way which no theological influence could possibly have accomplished.

Coming to detail, we find the number seven playing an important part in the astral economy, as in many other ways with which we are familiar. It is a great mistake to imagine that seven as a key number is one of any deep significance in the universe at large. It has a deep significance as regards our world, of which, after all, the astral plane is merely a part—a part as definitely objective as so much granite rock to appropriate senses of perception. To those the granite rock would hardly make an appeal. We must think of the astral world to begin with as consisting of a vast series of concentric shells entirely surrounding this Earth, the aggregate diameter of which is enormously greater than that of the physical globe. It is difficult to get measurements in miles when dealing with the region of nature in which, for some purposes, distance is almost negligible, and yet, in truth, there are definite magnitudes in connection with the various subdivisions of the astral world which may actually be expressed in terms of our measure-

ment. Enough for the moment to realize that the height above the earth's surface to which the loftier subdivisions of the astral world extend is to be thought of at least in tens of thousands of miles. Then, if we begin to attempt a survey of the varied subdivisions, we have to recognize that the astral plane interpenetrates the physical body of the earth to a fairly considerable extent, and that the regions thus submerged below the earth's surface are horrible in their characteristics, though definitely fulfilling a purpose in the Divine plan of human evolution. There are two distinct concentric shells of astral matter sunk within the body of the earth. The lowest of all is one with which humanity has scarcely anything to do, or ought not to have anything to do, though in the ghastly unprecedented conditions of Satanic disturbance that we are going through, influences from that lowest astral region have been brought to the surface for our profound discomfort. Sub-plane No. 1 ought to be concerned merely with the gradual disintegration of elemental forms that played a part appropriately enough in the very earliest history of this planet, but the need for which has long since expired. Level No. 2, immediately below the earth's surface, is the real Hell of actual Nature, a condition of suffering for those who drift thither that can hardly be exaggerated in imagination. That such suffering, however, is destined to be curative in its character is a fundamental idea to which, in investigating that region, we should always cling. It deals only with the most hideously degraded and atrociously criminal representatives of our humanity.

Without for the moment attempting to go into further detail in connection with this ghastly department of the subject, we still have to realize that when we consider Sub-plane No. 3, that which is the first

above the surface of the physical world, we are still in touch with a purgatorial realm, the curative influences of which are appropriate to evil-doers whose iniquity falls short of that which leads to the lower hell. Experiences on No. 3 may, nevertheless, be of a serious character. The misapprehension people are so liable to fall into in connection with this purgatorial condition arises from a very common tendency to take too severe a view of our own shortcomings. People taught to consider themselves miserable sinners, merely because they are leading a commonplace physical life, are probably, in most cases, so entirely innocent in reality that when free of the body they will slip unconsciously through the purgatorial region and wake up happily on some level of the fourth sub-plane. Again, the study of the purgatorial region is so intricate that imagination is misled if we dwell upon it elaborately before realizing the still greater and altogether beautiful intricacies of the higher sub-planes which, from the lower levels of the fourth right up to the highest, are hardly tinged with any emotion in the nature of suffering. The intricacy and complication of the vast fourth sub-plane will be readily comprehended, when we think of it as the natural future home of entities as varied as the population of the earth, or, leaving out of account the humbler multitudes of uncivilized communities, the difference between individual Egos within the limits of a civilized country like our own are so enormous and elaborate that natural law has, indeed, a delicate task in providing all with perfectly suitable environment in the restful period between two physical lives. Close observation, to begin with, divides the fourth sub-plane into another septenary series, but seven is left far in the rear as a number indicative of the need such life develops for variety. On quite the lower levels

of the fourth we find life carried on with such close resemblance to the conditions of physical life on this globe, that when we hear of houses, theatres, and amusements there, landscapes and lakes, and actual furniture in the houses, some of us start up indignantly with the idea of associating such phenomena with a spiritual condition. The spiritual life and fleshly life are, however, closely intermingled, not merely in the living human body, but in the superphysical worlds, appropriate to human existence. There are people on the astral world free of all painful embarrassments, but who have not climbed beyond the conception of happiness associated with physical enjoyment. To find these still available to the astral life their aspirations in that direction must, indeed, be a good deal refined, and we have always to remember that the affections which play so important a part in our life even here are still more supreme in their importance on all the happy levels of the astral world. Karma entangles incarnate life with all kinds of associations, and though it may permit us to enjoy some really congenial companionship it often forces upon us a good deal of the other kind. In the astral life, even on the fourth level, not to speak for the moment of loftier conditions, people are never thrown into companionship which is otherwise than congenial. This is one of the foremost assurances we gather from people speaking to us from the next world. Sometimes they are still with friends they have known and cared for on the Earth-life, but in any case with people towards whom they feel entirely sympathetic.

In attempting this sort of survey, the magnitude of the task is intimidating. We have accumulated such a vast body of detailed information concerning astral life, that, to use a favourite simile, one cannot see the forest for the trees; but keeping for the moment to generalities, let me attempt to indicate the leading

characteristics of the vast fifth, sixth, and seventh sub-planes of the astral world. These must not be thought as definitely one superior to the other. Through the various minor subdivisions of the vast fourth sub-plane people do get actually promoted, as it were, from one to the other as their qualifications for enjoying the higher regions become developed; but once attaining the highest levels of the fourth, the other regions are reached, not so much by virtue of anything that can be thought of as promotion, but in accordance with what may much more accurately be described as individual taste. Roughly speaking, the fifth sub-plane is the region in which intellectual activity can most easily expand; the sixth is more devotional in its character, while the seventh is a region in which those Egos that have played an important public part in the Earth-life find themselves in congenial companionship, and within reach of opportunities for developing their own qualifications as leaders of men in preparation for future incarnations along that line of activity.

The idea just hinted at interprets the enormously significant fact that in various departments of human distinction great Egos remain by preference on the higher levels of the astral world instead of passing on, as they conceivably might, to the still more elevated conditions of the Manasic plane. Let us consider, for example, the choice to be made by the great men of science as they pass on from physical life. Assume, first, that they have no bad Karma to keep them for a while on No. 3. They wake up on the highest levels of the fourth in company with congenial friends in their own line of development. They quickly learn that on the fifth, to which they can pass on at will, splendid opportunities for carrying on the scientific researches to which they may have been devoted lie within their reach. They see that to

take a forward leap to the Manasic plane would break the continuity of their work—land them on levels of perception out of tune with the science they have been used to. It would carry them on to another line of development altogether. By keeping on the astral, they acquire new knowledge in tune with that of their lives just spent. That will invest their Egos with expanded capacity. In the next life on Earth they will be able to carry on their work from the point at which they left it off last, and they see the plain path of duty before them.

The same principle certainly applies to the case of the great poets of the past who are gathered together on the sixth sub-plane, though in other departments of artistic greatness complications may arise. But how about people who are not especially distinguished? Have they any choice as regards astral and Manasic destinies? Serious confusion of thought arose among Theosophical students in the beginning by reason of the way in which we happened to pick up some quite correct information about the Devachanic state. That is a condition of blissful illusion on the lower levels of the Manasic plane, appropriate to people innocent of wrong-doing, of affectionate nature, but not highly qualified intellectually, or in other ways, for active work or progress on the astral plane. The mistake we made at first was to suppose that the Devachanic state was a goal to be aimed at by all. As we have come to understand the life and opportunities of the higher astral world, the mistake assumes a ludicrous aspect.

Obviously the study of astral details is an endless task, and can only be carried out thoroughly when we are in personal touch with them; but one idea not yet dealt with in this hurried survey can be understood now, and claims attention. Besides that which may be broadly thought of as the stratification con-

centrically of the astral world, it has vast divisions that may be thought of as corresponding to the geographical divisions of this Earth. Over the great geographical areas of the Earth lie the astral regions appropriate to the people of the region below. Thus the astral regions over India and other parts of Asia are quite different in many ways from the astral regions over European countries. This does not interfere with the fact that movement from one part of the astral world to any other with the velocity of light is open to any one belonging to that world *who knows, to start with,* that he has the power of getting about in that way. In truth, that knowledge only appertains to people who have been making some progress during physical life in occult study. The vast majority of perfectly commonplace people on the comfortable lower levels of the fourth sub-plane never want to investigate, for example, the corresponding conditions of the Indian astral world. In a still more emphatic extent the Indian on the astral never thinks of its Western aspect, unless he belongs to the few who have travelled West in life.

Does the geographical idea adapted to astral conditions embarrass thought in any way? Are there blank spaces corresponding to the great oceans? Not at all. The ocean spaces allow of convenient adjustments. Our British astral stretches half across the Atlantic, and no doubt impinges (though I do not remember to have heard of this as a fact) on the American astral, necessarily a very wide domain.

For those who realize the importance, as well as the possibilities of getting definite and vivid mental conceptions of super-physical Nature, this geography of the astral world is extremely significant. It all helps to make the whole complicated realm harmonious and restful for the great multitudes. For all of us there may in future be a time when nationality becomes

merged in some higher attribute of exalted consciousness, but all progress is gradual. That is the foremost principle to be discerned in studying astral life. Spiritualists all recognize it, as well as those who derive super-physical knowledge in other ways. For a time people passing on are on the other side just what they were here. Especially, therefore, they are of the same nationality as here. If all the nations of the world were jumbled up together on the astral, that world would not, as it does, show us the laws and designs of Nature in perfect harmony and accord —in that symmetrical aspect which appeals so powerfully to the intelligent observer. That is the peculiar charm of the later Theosophical teaching. It enables all who truly understand the Theosophical movement to feel that they are engaged not merely in stimulating spiritual aspiration, but in the magnificent task of creating a true spiritual science.

### 4.—The Infinite Future

As I have endeavoured to show, in dealing with the phenomena of the astral plane, it is possible to obtain clearly defined knowledge in reference to some aspects of the super-physical future awaiting mankind. The immediately "next world" may become so vividly foreseen during our stay in this one, that its importance to us may be appreciated in a way rarely attained under the influence of simple religious thought. That alone may give rise to a beautifully reverential emotion in reference to the future life, but not to the same kind of absolute confidence engendered by specific knowledge. Take an imaginary case—in illustration of what I mean—from the possible conditions of ordinary life. Suppose a young man entering some business or profession is told by some friend, "You might do better if you went to America." The young man does not deny this, but

still thinks he can do fairly well at home, so he does not dwell in thought on the friend's idea. Suppose he is offered a definite engagement or opportunity in America, and signs a contract to go there next year. Will he not become at once deeply interested in the conditions of residence in America? He would read books about the country, talk eagerly with travellers who had been there; fit himself out with clothes and other things appropriate to the climate he would know to be that of his future home. He would not neglect his current work, because he would know that his efficiency therein would have much to do with his welfare in the new life; but he would look on the current work with an eye to the future, attending to it all the more zealously so far as it trained his capacity, but with a sense of detachment that would make him relatively indifferent to its immediate results.

Will the little parable fit the case of those who are—and who are not?—destined to migrate at no very distant future to the astral plane? Most people, it is true, have made no attempt to get information in advance in reference to the conditions prevailing there, because they have not believed any information on the subject to be trustworthy. The misty suggestions of religious doctrine left all details obscure. Spiritualism incurred discredit in various ways, and the importance of its main revelation was imperfectly understood by the critical world at large; but now we have to deal with a fuller revelation conveyed to us by Theosophy. The history of the movement since 1880 embodies its credentials. The vision of the future is clearing up in many directions. That department which includes life on the astral plane is illuminated by a great wealth of knowledge. For all who appreciate this, that knowledge sheds light on the path they are actually treading through the

current physical life, and with an expanded power of gazing into futurity, we are already beginning to concern ourselves with problems of *infinite* futurity extending far beyond the range of astral experience and physical reincarnation.

The feeling with which we do this is very unlike that which governs the investigation of astral conditions. The ultimate conditions of our humanity when the history of this world is complete are interesting only to thinkers who can deal in imagination with states of consciousness, so far transcending that of any one personal life, that they are content to lose touch with the limitations which actually engender the feeling of individuality. And if, as we may, we look beyond the limitations of the one world we seem to lose sight of ourselves. Thus the contemplation of infinite futurity is not at the first glance at all events compatible with an interest in ourselves. But none the less does it dignify all thinking, even of the kind which does relate to ourselves. We know that the continuity of our individual consciousness will never be broken. Plant us suddenly in the state we shall be in—say, ten million years hence—and that would be so unlike our present state that we should not recognize ourselves. The leap would be equivalent to annihilation of our present selves. The gradual character of the change will preclude this unhappy result. So we really may discuss the problems of infinitude with composure without making the great mistake of projecting our personal limitations into infinity.

Campbell's poem—beautiful in some respects—"The Last Man" is a ludicrous illustration of this mistake. "I saw the last of human mould, That shall Creation's death behold as Adam saw her prime." No doubt "The Sun himself must die," but that will not happen till the Life of the Sun, including ours,

is transferred to another vehicle, and we know enough now to foresee the change. We know that our Sun is one of many constituting a stupendous Cosmos, of which the great star Sirius is the centre. We can apply the rule, "as below; so above," even to this state of things. The planets of our solar system breed their humanities, which attain perfection, and pass into Divine Hierarchies. The aggregate hierarchies of each solar system in the Sirian Cosmos must have corresponding destinies on a loftier level. With us, planet is linked with planet in accordance with a comprehensive scheme providing for the ultimate perfection of all. Beyond doubt the solar systems of the Cosmos must be linked together in a somewhat similar way. And already we have learned something about their destinies, which shows these analagous to the idea underlying the succession of manvantaras in each planetary chain of our system. A sun which is in manifestation on the physical plane has in a former manvantara been a sun on a super-physical plane, and will again, in some mysterious upward arc of evolution, be on a super-physical plane. I avoid saying on the Astral or Manasic plane because these terms in reference to the Cosmos must mean something very unlike their meaning in this one solar system.

All through these mighty changes the continuity of each individual consciousness concerned with them will be maintained. However overwhelming to the mind may be the character of these colossal processes of change, we can already contemplate them with open-eyed admiration, as on a lesser scale we may contemplate the splendour of a mountain range bathed in the colours of the sunset. Even natural beauty and grandeur of that order is uplifting in its effect on the emotions. So with the mental influence of attempts to gaze in thought at the infinitudes of spiritual

development. By comparison our Humanity seems so small—if, indeed, we can think of it at all as the stupendous magnificence of the Cosmos is partly revealed to us. In one sense, if we can forget it, so much the better. Truth lies in some paradoxical phrases about sublime results attained by the loss of what seems everything for the moment, but paradoxes may be misleading as well as suggestive. If only by our capacity to admire, we are identified with the glories of infinitude—the realm to which, attached to it by ties that can never be broken, we eternally belong.

# THE PYRAMIDS AND STONEHENGE

INDEPENDENTLY of knowledge concerning the spiritual growth of humanity, with which theosophy is specially concerned, a great deal of information that could not be obtained in any other way may sometimes be acquired by theosophical students in reference to the plain external history of the world around us. Literary research in such matters very soon reaches the limit of its tether. In dealing with the remote past it is paralyzed for want of written records, and at the best can only supplement these by interpreting a few inscriptions on stone. With their aid we are enabled to reach back in the direction of what Mr. Samuel Laing calls "Human Origins" some 5,000 years before the Christian era. But evidences which are not less certain than those of Egyptian hieroglyphics, show us that Man existed on the earth at past periods which geology fails to estimate with exactitude, but which certainly extend back millions of years. In this way we are confronted with a problem which, in its broadest aspects, only admits of two alternative hypotheses. Either for those millions of years mankind existed on the earth in a savage state, never rising above the use of the barbarous stone implements we find associated with his fossil remains, or he attained to early civilizations at remote periods, the regular historical traces of which have been lost.

Comparing these two views, mere reasoning on the basis of evidence that everyone is equally qualified to appreciate will go far to support a belief in pre-

historic civilizations. In Egypt, the testimony of the monuments and of papyrus records, already translated, carries us back to a period about 5,000 years B.C. But at that time we find ourselves just as much in presence of Egyptian civilization as at that relatively modern epoch of Egyptian grandeur, the Eighteenth Dynasty. According to the admirable German Egyptologist, Brugsch Bey, Menes, the first king of the first dynasty mentioned by Manetho, altered the course of the Nile by constructing an enormous dyke, in order to facilitate the foundation of Memphis. He was a law-giver, moreover, and is said to have greatly augmented the pomp and extravagance of the monarchy, thus showing himself at the same time not merely a civilized ruler, but one who had already contracted some of the vices of civilization, a sure indication that he belonged to a declining rather than to a rising era of his country's progress. But, in truth, people have got into the way of thinking of him as if he were a primeval personage, merely because he begins Manetho's list of the kings in so far as that list has been preserved for us by the accident of its quotation by some classical writers. The original work of Manetho vanished probably in the smoke of the Alexandrian library. It is known through other writers that Manetho spoke of Egyptian epochs long previous to that of the thirty dynasties; and even if he had not done so, the situation faintly portrayed as prevailing in the time of Menes is enough to show that it must have been the growth of a social progress extending into the past for almost immeasurable ages previously. Fifteen and not five millenniums B.C. must be taken into account—according to some of the modern Egyptologists now engaged in translating the papyri—if we wish to frame a picture in our own minds of the rise of Egyptian civilization.

Turning now to another modern investigation, we

have to recognize that by degrees a mass of testimony has accumulated on our hands in support of the classical legend concerning the lost continent of Atlantis. The Egyptain priests whom he visited gave a great deal of information on that subject to Plato's ancestor Solon. For a long time modern scholarship was inclined to treat the story as a fable, one hardly knows why, because the recognized course of change on the earth's crust makes it certain that most of what is now dry land was once ocean bed, and *vice versa*. There is an *a priori* probability, therefore, that some such continent as the " fabled " Atlantis must once have existed. And now there are abundant evidences, derived from the surveys of the Atlantic bed within the last few years, to show that the site assigned to Atlantis was probably that of great land masses during some former configuration of the earth's surface. Furthermore, comparative archæology brings out identities between the pre-historic symbolism and remains of Mexico and Central America on the one hand, and those of Egypt and Syria on the other. These point to a common origin which Atlantis would exactly supply. A persevering explorer of Mexico and Yucatan, Dr. Le Plongeon, has, to quote a recent and very striking scrap of evidence, succeeded in deciphering the character in which ancient Mexican inscriptions are written, and has even translated a very old manuscript saved from the vandalism of Cortez and his attendant monks. This turns out to include a straightforward record of the final catastrophe which swallowed up the last remnant of Atlantis ten or twelve thousand years ago.

The question of Atlantis is immensely important, and I am, for the present, merely referring to the chain of reasoning by which its actual existence in former-days is supported. A thorough examination of the merely exoteric evidence on the subject would

be a large undertaking in itself, and I have another task before me for the moment. But all theosophical students, and even cursory readers of theosophical books, will be aware that the teaching concerning the origins of the human race that have been given to the world in connection with the inauguration of the theosophical movement, gear in with that belief in the former existence of the Atlantean continent which, as I have shown, is making its way even in the outside world, which has nothing to do with theosophy. Humanity, according to all theosophical authorities, is evolved through a series of great root races, of which the Atlantean race was the predecessor of our own. I do not put forward the statement as in itself conclusive, because the whole character of theosophic teaching—as far as its really qualified exponents are concerned—is opposed to the principle of *ex cathedra* assertion. The regular method of instruction adopted by the Masters of occult science is to show the student how his own interior dormant faculties may be awakened and brought to bear on the discovery of truth, whether it has to do with the planes of Nature and consciousness superior to our own, or with periods of the world's history long anterior to our own. Until the pupil is sufficiently advanced to have the power of applying his own direct perceptions to the questions he may wish to investigate, he is almost discouraged from taking the statements of others, more advanced than himself, on trust. But, at the same time, we must steer a middle course between the attitude of mental servility and the attitude of narrow-minded incredulity. For the reasonable theosophic student who has found substantial ground for relying on the knowledge and *bona fides* of the occult Masters, from whom our current theosophic teaching has been received, the statements they make in reference to such matters

as the character and place in Nature of the Atlantean race will necessarily have very great weight.

Indeed, I may go a step forward in explaining why some theosophic students at all events come to look upon facts concerning Atlantis, and the light that can be thrown by occult inquiry on the remote history of Egypt, as coming within the range of something nearer to them than the knowledge of their higher teachers.

An instrument of research is placed in the hands of theosophic students sufficiently advanced to make use of it, which actually brings a great deal of the ancient history of the earth within the reach of their direct perception. This is the faculty of actually seeing, with an inner sense adapted to the process, former states and conditions of any place or object with which the seer or clairvoyant may be in contact. Many people of our day are so ill-informed concerning the most interesting developments of science in progress around us, as to disbelieve in clairvoyance from A to Z. To those of us who know better, that is like disbelieving in the differential calculus—an attitude of mind simply absurd in presence of recorded facts and experience. Clairvoyants may be one per *mil*, one in ten thousand if you like, of the population at large, but they are sufficiently numerous to make the reality of their capacities as certain as the occasional capacity of the human mind to understand the higher mathematics.

Clairvoyance has many varieties and ramifications, but that with which I am concerned for the moment has been called—rather clumsily, perhaps, by modern writers dealing with it—psychometry. In its simplest manifestation it is not very uncommon. I have met many people, besides those who have had a regular occult training, who are able, by fingering a letter, without looking at it or reading it—or perhaps by

putting it to their foreheads—to get impressions concerning the person who has written it, extending sometimes to an accurate delineation of his outward appearance and character. Now, this accomplishment depends upon facts of Nature that are enormously important in their wider manifestations. Psychometrising letters bears to the law under which it becomes possible much the same relation that the experiment of rubbing sealing-wax so as to make it attract little bits of paper bears to the whole science of electricity. There is a medium in Nature in which pictures, so to speak, of all that has ever taken place on earth are indestructibly preserved for ever. This medium is spoken of in the occult literature of the East as the Akasa. European medieval occultists mean the same thing when they speak of the astral light. This astral light includes a record for those who can perceive and interpret it, that dwarfs to insignificance the value, for historical purposes, of all the written documents the world contains.

Psychic faculties of a very adept-like order, educated, moreover, with scientific precision, and borne up on a highly spiritualized character, are required for the complete exploration of the astral light. Such faculties belong to the higher theosophic teachers, and it is partly to their exercise that is due the knowledge concerning the remote past of the world which they possess. I say "partly" because, in truth, the higher initiates of occultism possess written records that have been handed down to them by a line of predecessors, but their own faculties enable them to verify these at any time. And, in truth, there are stages of development which many of their pupils reach from which a great deal of historical—not to speak for the moment of other sorts of—information can be gathered from the astral light. This has sometimes been called the

Memory of Nature. All memory—even that of the most familiar kind—is in truth a reading in the astral light. But the faculties that have not been developed by occult training are only capable of reading those records, at the making of which the person concerned has actually been present. Only with those have his astral senses been closely enough associated to make it possible for him to recover touch with them at will. The occultist whose astral senses are very much more delicate is able to follow other channels of association, other magnetic currents, to use the technical expression, and this hint gives us the clue to the comprehension of the psychometric faculty.

Tangible objects, as well as the inner vehicles of human consciousness, are connected by permanent magnetic currents with the astral records that have been originally established in their neighbourhood. The trained occultist, by touching or handling such tangible objects, is enabled to get upon these currents, to put his own astral senses into the same relationship with the astral records to which such currents lead, as that which normally exists between his own astral self and bygone scenes of his own life that he has witnessed. Take the case of recollections any of us may entertain of some distant place he may formerly have visited. Desirous of remembering it, he turns back his thoughts upon that page of his memory, and in a certain interior way may be said to see again the scene of which he thinks. The occultist in the same way lays his hand upon the stones of a building—or it may be enough for him merely to come near them—and he can follow the magnetic thread of connection which leads back his consciousness to the early events with which they were associated.

This is the way in which, for the occultist, the pyramids of Egypt may be made to tell their own

story very much more fully than it is possible to trace this with the help of fragmentary inscriptions or documents accidentally surviving the destroying influence of time. The extent to which the psychometric faculty is trustworthy in the case of people below the level of adeptship is a question that can only be considered in reference to each case in turn; but, at all events, I have had the advantage of being assisted—in such attempts as I have made to penetrate rather more deeply than usual the mystery of Egyptian antiquities—by psychometric power of a very high order, and I have been enabled to check the information I have thus received through the fuller knowledge possessed by those from whom the teaching put forward in various theosophic books from my hand has been derived. In this way I have been enabled to build up a conception of the early beginnings of Egyptian civilization which constitutes a coherent and intelligible sketch of the whole process, and synthesises in a very interesting manner a great deal of disjointed speculation concerning the evolution of the human race towards which archæological research of the ordinary kind has been groping its way. I will now put forward the story for the benefit of all who may be sufficiently in touch with occult methods of investigation to appreciate its *prima facie* claim to attention.

Of course, the investigation of Egyptian beginnings brings us into relations with the Atlantean race. If we go back far enough in the history of mankind—if we go back a million years—we find ourselves in the midst of a period when there was next to nothing else in the nature of a population on the earth, except the Atlantean race—inhabiting many regions, as the earth was then configurated, besides those which formed part of the continent of Atlantis—just as at the present day, to draw an illustration from one

of the minor ethnological divisions of our own great race, the Caucasians inhabit many other regions of the earth besides the Caucasus. But different ramifications of the same root race may differ very widely from each other: and at a time when the main body of the Atlantean race on the continent of Atlantis had attained a very high degree of civilization and power, Egypt, amongst other countries, was in the occupation of a relatively primitive people, whom we need not think of as savage or barbarous in the worst sense of those words, but for whom the arts and customs of civilization were as yet a closed book.

As far back as 800,000 years ago the Atlantean continent, having all but fulfilled its destinies in the education of the human race, began to melt away. The process was inaugurated at the period just mentioned by a geological catastrophe, on a very stupendous scale; but that merely began, it did not accomplish, what is known to occult history as the submergence of Atlantis. The continent held out against the destructive forces of Nature till about 80,000 years ago, when some considerable portions surviving till then finally disappeared, leaving only one big island—the Atlantis of classical tradition—which perished in a great natural convulsion about 11,500 years ago, a date originally derived from occult teaching, and approximately confirmed by Le Plongeon's discoveries, to which reference has already been made.

During the enormous period covered by the gradual submergence of the great land masses of the original continent, extensive migrations to other regions of the then existing world were accomplished by detachments of the Atlantean people. The most spiritually enlightened and advanced representatives of the race were especially involved in these migra-

tions. The destruction of Atlantis as a physical process was proceeding *parri passu* with the moral degradation of the people. The adepts of the race shrank away as much from the incurable degeneration of their countrymen as from the doomed continent whose fate they foresaw. It was not in that decaying and corrupt civilization that their influence could any longer be exerted with advantage. They had to discover a younger and more vigorous human stock, on which to graft the spiritual impulse of which they were the custodians.

At that period a large part of Europe, especially of eastern Europe, was an uninhabited swamp—scarcely upheaved from the ocean to which Atlantis was returning. But Egypt, though very different in its geography from the Egypt of the present day, was already inhabited land, as also were the countries bounding the Mediterranean on the east. Somewhere about the middle of the enormous period assigned to the submergence of Atlantis, a good many of the Atlantean adepts, accompanied by considerable numbers of their uninitiated contemporaries, settled in these countries, as also by degrees, and later on, in the western regions of our present Europe, as well as in many parts of the eastern world. On ground which is now part of our own British Islands, though it had not at that time separated itself from the main continent, Atlantean adepts left traces of their presence, some of which survive to the current epoch. In Stonehenge we possess a memorial of the Atlantean dispersion, though that structure is of more recent date than the pyramids of Egypt.

For a very long time the adept immigrants who settled in what is now Egypt did not attempt the education of the people in the arts of civilization. They simply resided in the country, and there, no doubt, brought forward individual pupils, and upheld

the higher spiritual knowledge which, however ill qualified to assimilate it the bulk of mankind at any time may be, can never be allowed to die out altogether, even if its guardians, as they sometimes may in the crises of human evolution, diminish to a few in number. What may have been the nature of the unseen spiritual influence they were bringing to bear all the while on the people amongst whom they lived, is a question that I need not attempt to deal with here. The race around them was gradually ripened for the teachings of a lofty civilization, and no doubt was largely augmented and elevated ethnologically by the infusion of the immigrant blood, for, as I have said, large numbers of Atlantean people, besides those who represented the adeptship of the period, accompanied their spiritual leaders in their migrations, and mingled their descendants with the original inhabitants of their new home.

Thus, at last, a time came when the seed sown amongst them germinated effectually. The adepts began to teach and rule as well as to reside in Egypt. The vague traditions as to long lines of Divine Kings, who preceded those dynasties chronicled by Manetho, are no mere fables of an infant humanity, as the narrow-minded ignorance of materialistic critics in the nineteenth century too often supposes them. The Divine Kings of Egypt were the early adept rulers, and the golden age of Egyptian greatness was that over which they presided, in millenniums far back in a past so remote that one almost hesitates to handle the real figures, amongst people of whom only a few as yet can have become completely emancipated from the mental fetters, as regards the duration of the world's history, forged for modern Europeans by the imbecile interpretation put by the theology of the Middle Ages on chronological statements of the Bible. In following back the history of

the earliest monuments of Egyptian civilization, by the help of those imperishable records still to be found, as vivid as ever, in the Memory of Nature by those who know how to gain access to its boundless picture-gallery, we do not have to add at a venture a few extra millenniums to the conventional dates of modern Egyptologists, but to measure their ages on the scale of Atlantean history. It was at a midway period between the first immigration of Atlantean adepts in Egypt, and the stage of the world's progress we have now reached, that the pyramids were really built, or, in other words, a little more than two hundred thousand years ago. Closely connected as they were in their origin and purpose with occult mysteries, it is impossible to obtain from initiated informants in the present day any very precise statement concerning the design which they subserved in the beginning. I have gathered a hint to the effect that, although no doubt from the beginning used as and designed to be temples or chambers of initiation —the great pyramid, for one, certainly containing other chambers besides the three that have been discovered —one purpose of the great pyramid was the protection of some tangible objects of great importance having to do with the occult mysteries. These were buried in the rock, it is said, and the pyramid was reared over them, its form and magnitude being adopted to render it safe from the hazards of earthquake, and even from the consequences of submergence beneath the sea, during the great secular undulations of the earth's surface.

This brings me to one of the most remarkable facts about the pyramids, among those which modern research has never suspected. Within the enormous period of their existence there has been time for more than one of those great changes in the configuration of the earth brought about by what some geologists,

at all events, recognize as a necessity of its constitution. The alternative elevations and depressions of continents and ocean beds are due to a slow pulsation of the body of the earth, that may be likened, as regards the surface, to the undulations of a sea that has settled down in a condition of almost perfect calm, but is still gently heaving under the influence of an all but imperceptible swell. Probably there are cross currents in such undulations that may occasionally intensify, and occasionally minimize them; but, at any rate, they cannot be excluded from any reasonable scientific hypothesis concerning the progress of geological growth, however far beyond the reach of our very brief historic records their last manifestations may be withdrawn.

Occult information on the subject brings some of them into view, and since the erection of the earliest pyramids one such undulation—connected with that which had to do with the final submergence of the last bit of the old Atlantean *Continent*—depressed the region which is now the Lower Nile valley below the level of the sea which spread over the northern part of Africa—except for the high lands near the Mediterranean coast. The west coast was also dry land at the period in question, but the present desert of Sahara was a sea, and that sea spread over the whole country now fertilized by the Lower Nile, as the huge undulation depressed its level.

The country of the Upper Nile was not submerged, and thither no doubt the population of Egypt, to a large extent, withdrew, although the submergence, I understand, was cataclysmic enough in its character to involve some destruction of life among those who clung longest to the menaced region. At all events, I am told that there was a considerable migration of the people to the east and west, as well as to the south, and for a time—I do not know exactly for how

long, but for a short time compared with the general course of the undulations of the great rock-sheet of the earth—the pyramids and the country round remained under water. Incidentally this will suggest that the present course of the River Nile was not that which it followed before the natural convulsion in question. The course to-day differs, I am told, as a matter of fact, from that which it followed in the age of the great pyramid's construction as high up as Thebes. The temple of Karnac is an Egyptian monument of enormous antiquity, though not so old as the great pyramid, and it never shared the submergence of the pyramid; but as far as the course of the river was concerned, that was different from what it is now, even as high up as Thebes, at the time of the erection of the temple of Karnac.

The sea again receded from lower Egypt after an interval, the exact duration of which has not been given to me, and the pyramids were again left dry. Rapidly as compared with the geological changes in progress, it was doubtless repeopled, and again taken in charge by the adept kings. I am inclined to regard the period which now came on as the really golden age of Egyptian civilization. The decline did not set in till much later. But Fate held another shock in reserve for the ancient State. When the last island remnant of Atlantis was submerged with cataclysmic violence about 11,500 years ago, an undulation of the oceans led to some enormous inundations, and without again becoming the bed of a sea as on the former occasion, the land of Egypt was overwhelmed with an immense flood, which again dispersed its people. I do not understand that this was on such a scale as again to submerge the pyramids, but, at any rate, the population was drowned or driven out of the surrounding country—for a time. When, in turn, this flood passed away and population spread again

over the land, there began that downward movement of spirituality and culture which, from the occultist's point of view, is the final brief period of the decadence of Egyptian civilization, though, for the modern Egyptologist, it includes the whole range of Egyptian history, behind which some inquirers begin to look out for the evidences of primitive man.

Probably when the decadent period began, or was somewhat advanced, the tangible objects, whatever they were, which the great pyramid was designed to cover, were removed to some other country chosen as the headquarters of the world's adeptship. And though, as long as the ancient wisdom religion survived in Egypt to any considerable extent, the pyramids continued to fulfil their purpose as temples of initiation, by degrees, no doubt, the full knowledge concerning their uses in this respect faded out from among the people. On the face of things, it would only be by initiated adepts that chambers dedicated to secret ceremonies could be put to such uses, and with the fading out of the adept element in the population, due to its own moral deterioration, the old traditions would naturally be lost. This consideration will, amongst others, abundantly account for the multiplication of pyramids in comparatively recent ages, when, certainly, there was no thought on the part of the builders of using them in connection with the introduction of neophytes to the mysteries of occult science. As late as within the last few thousand years some of the pyramids along the Nile valley have been erected. While, therefore, occult teaching entirely discountenances the conventional theory that the pyramids in all cases were put up to serve as the tombs of monarchs, it opens the door to conjectures along that road as regards some of the latest among them. From an antiquity with which the decadent dynasties had probably lost touch, the

example of the earlier pyramids as a fashion in architecture had obviously been handed down.

Certainly the coffer of the great pyramid was neither a sarcophagus nor, as Piazzi Smyth conjectures, a standard measure of capacity, but a font in which certain baptismal ceremonies connected with initiations were carried out. It is possible, however, that in the later and degenerate period of Egyptian history —to which all the Manetho dynasties belong—some of the kings, losing touch with the ideas associated with the more ancient pyramids in the beginning, may have followed the fashion of their architecture without knowing why it was originally designed, and may have put up pyramids to be their tombs. I understand definitely that this was the case, but the fact in no way militates against the explanations just given.

The great pyramid has been assigned by most Egyptologists to a king of the fourth dynasty, generally known as Cheops, or more correctly, to students of hieroglyphics, as Khufu. That monarch is supposed to have built it, and to have gone on adding to its size as long as he lived. As his reign was a long one, the enormous magnitude of the building—standing on a base the size of Lincoln's Inn Fields—is thus accounted for. My own information is to the effect that Khufu simply restored some portions of the pyramid that had suffered injury, also, for reasons that I have not heard stated, closing up some of the chambers that were previously accessible. It is admitted by modern Egyptologists that the evidence which points to Khufu as the builder of the pyramid is meagre, although the original guess has been quoted so often now that most writers assume it to be somehow known as a fact.

The manipulation of the enormous stones used in this edifice, as also, indeed, the construction of the

great pyramid itself, can only be explained by the application to these tasks of some knowledge concerning the forces of Nature which was lost to mankind during the decadence of Egyptian civilization and the barbarism of the Middle Ages, and has not yet been recovered by modern science. This branch of the subject, however, may be conveniently reviewed in connection with some other architectural bequests from the ages in which the adepts dispersed from Atlantis were still taking part in the external life of Egypt, and, indeed, of some other countries now forming part of the European continent. In England itself we have architectural remains connected with the ascendancy here at one time of Atlantean adepts, the interpretation of which has been as much clouded by fantastic theories as by the passage of the ages that have gone by since their erection.

Stonehenge is a riddle that has perplexed speculation as profoundly in its way as the pyramids themselves. Most archæologists have assumed that it was erected by the Druids of ancient Britain, who were already disappearing as a priestly caste at the time of the Roman invasion, although still carrying on secret and sanguinary rites to which some Roman historians have referred. This somewhat crude conjecture, which offered no explanation of the methods by which an uncivilized race of people like those inhabiting the Britain that Julius Cæsar conquered, could have handled the enormous monoliths of which Stonehenge consists, did not satisfy Mr. James Fergusson, who has devoted so much painstaking research to the subject of the *Rude Stone Monuments*, dealt with in his interesting volume bearing

that title. Mr. Fergusson had a passion for discerning a recent origin in all the remains of antiquity, and, taking advantage of the obscurity that hangs over two or three hundred years of English history, following on the abandonment of these islands by the Romans, he has developed an elaborate hypothesis, according to which Stonehenge was erected in the time of King Arthur, to celebrate one of the twelve great battles in which that hero is said to have overthrown the heathen. Mr. Fergusson will have nothing to say to previous arguments that had assigned a religious purpose to the great relics on Salisbury Plain, and makes them out to have been nothing more than stones set up to commemorate a victory. He could not by any intentional efforts to that end have supplied us with a more grotesque *reductio ad absurdum* of that general view of the world which regards the civilization now around us as having grown up from an immediately preceding condition of primeval human infancy. One of the reasons for which Mr. Fergusson rejects the Druidical theory is derived from the impossibility of supposing that such a mere race of savages as the Romans found in Britain could have handled the stone masses of which the ruin in question consists; but he is content to pass lightly over this embarrassment in dealing with his own theory, on the assumption that after the Roman occupation the Britons would have picked up a good deal of engineering knowledge from their conquerors. The Romans themselves would have been no better able than the Britons to manipulate the materials of Stonehenge. The "imposts" or upper stones of the great trilithons are themselves about eleven tons each in weight, and the uprights thirty tons each. It is nonsense to talk of such masses as being moved about and set up in their places with great exactitude by builders simply em-

ploying the strength of human muscles in the work. The mechanical resources of the present day would be heavily taxed to erect a second Stonehenge beside the first. Nor is the absurdity of such a hypothesis measured merely by the weight of the monoliths on Salisbury Plain. By Mr. Fergusson's own admissions we have to bring into our survey of the past the remains of Stonehenge and Avebury, and also the innumerable " dolmens " that are found about these islands, and in larger numbers in France, Spain, and Scandinavia. It is no use to give an explanation that will fit in with facts in one case, if it fails to square with those of another. The dolmens have to be accounted for as well as the Arthurian battle memorials. And in the case of some among the dolmens the weights to be dealt with throw those of Stonehenge into the shade. Dolmens are simple structures, in which one mass of rock—the capstone—is hoisted up on three or more supports; and one measured in Cornwall, in the parish of Constantine, is computed to weigh 750 tons. Another in Pembrokeshire is a great tabular slab, big enough for five people on horseback to take shelter beneath it. What were the uses to which these strange monuments were put? The Arthurian hypothesis leaves the matter as much in the dark as the Druidical theory at which Mr. Fergusson takes offence. And the notion that the Britons might have become qualified to raise capstones weighing 750 tons, merely because they had picked up some engineering skill by watching the Roman road-makers, is too childish to consider seriously.

People who contend, with Mr. Fergusson, that the rude stone monuments must have been put up in the third and fourth centuries, because we know they have not been built since, while they could not have been erected by primeval savages, are simply—

without setting out on that argument consciously—making smooth the path that conducts us back, in search of an explanation, to a civilization anterior to our own, the traces of which have all but evaporated from the records from which, till lately, we have been constructing the history of the ancient world. Atlantis is the only rational clue to the comprehension of Stonehenge, just as it affords the only satisfactory solution of ancient Egypt.

The information on the subject to be gathered from those to whom the *Memory of Nature* is an open book, shows us the dispersed adepts from Atlantis as the founders in Western Europe of the religious rites that Stonehenge was designed to subserve. At a much later period than that which witnessed the Atlantean migration to Egypt, some representatives of the higher Atlantean occultism established themselves in the country which, in the subsequent changes of physical geography, was destined to become the British Isles. Their influence established a civilization among the people which did not prove of the strong and enduring character attaching to that planted in Egypt, but which, nevertheless, gave rise to considerable cities, all traces of which have now passed away. And Stonehenge was erected as a temple, in which the exoteric worship they taught to the people could be carried on. It was never covered with any roof. Its rude structure was purposely adopted by the exiles from Atlantis as a mute protest against the corrupt luxury of the perishing civilization they had left behind. In Atlantis itself the human family had touched the nadir point of materiality. Great developments of scientific knowledge had been turned entirely to the service of the physical life, and spiritual aspiration was entirely stifled in the pursuit of material welfare. Personal luxury, cultivated by those who were strong enough to secure it for themselves, was

the goal to which all the energies of the race were bent. Many secrets of Nature, which the science of this fifth race has not yet recovered, were degraded to the exclusive service of physical enjoyment by the dominant classes—for an inferior, servile race also inhabited the country—and the spiritual adepts of the period turned with disgust from a community which it was not in their power to redeem. They set themselves the task of implanting amongst a simpler and relatively barbarous population abroad, whose descendants were destined, in progress of time, to melt into the next great race, the spiritual enthusiasm that might, in their case, lead on to an ennobled future. So the external ceremonies of the religion they taught were carried on under their guidance with stern simplicity. They built their great temple, of unhewn rocks. They sought no architectural effects that would divert attention from Nature. They invested their great cathedral with no other claims to admiration but those depending on the massive grandeur of its proportions.

But how did they overcome the difficulty of manipulating the huge masses of stone, the mere superposition of which, one upon the other, seems to have demanded mechanical resources which we can hardly associate in imagination with any period but our own? For that matter, in Atlantis itself it may be found, when fuller light is ultimately cast upon its history, that mechanical resources of a very advanced order were available for any work that needed them; but the builders of that age were not exclusively dependent on appliances of the kind we now make use of in handling large masses of material. In the maturity of Atlantean civilization some forces of Nature, now only under the control of adepts in occult science, were in general use. The adepts of the time were under no obligation to keep the secret of their

existence jealously guarded; and among them was that power, so rarely exercised now that its very existence is scornfully derided by the commonplace crowd—the power of modifying the force we call gravity.

It is rarely of use in public utterances in the present day, when current intelligence is engaged in channels far removed from those of occult attainment, to speak of adept powers that are wholly out of gear with modern experience of natural possibilities. But in reference to the peculiar power to which I have just referred, the truth is that the modification of the force of gravity, by methods human ingenuity may bring into play, can only seem absurd to people who are ignorant of certain suggestive facts already within the experience of scientific investigation and, at the same time, wilfully blind to the evidence of mysterious occurrences notoriously taking place, though altogether unexplained so far, in the realm of spiritualistic experience. Theosophists are, of course, very far from accepting the theories of spiritualism in regard to the destinies of the human soul after death; but the external facts, familiar to the investigators of spiritualism, are facts none the less which must be fitted into their places in any conceptions of Nature framed by intelligent reasoning. The foolish crowd ignore these, because impostors are constantly detected in imitating by trickery the comparatively rare phenomena which, under the auspices of spiritual mediumship, illustrate the occasional activity of forces that set at defiance the very limited knowledge of natural secrets generally diffused amongst us at present. But the remark attributed to Galileo, *e pur si muove*, is highly applicable in this case. In face of all that has been recorded by qualified spiritualistic investigators—a body of testimony which is not affected in the smallest degree by exposures of

sham spiritualism in other cases—it is curiously illustrative of the capacities of human stupidity, that people, fancying themselves clear-headed and sagacious, should continue to discredit the fact that, at spiritual séances, heavy objects are sometimes "levitated," caused, that is, to rise or even float about in the air under the influence of invisible agencies, or forces that have for the time being counteracted, as far as such objects are concerned, the usually operative force called gravity.

But that which happens only now and then, no matter how rarely, must be traceable, if only we knew enough, to the operation of some law as natural as that under which steam expands. Nor is there anything in the essence of the matter more mysterious in the fact that solid objects are sometimes repelled from the earth—or levitated—than in the other fact that more usually they are attracted. No modern physicist has as yet any glimmering conception as to why or how gravity works. We are no better informed at this moment than Newton as to why the apple falls. We can, to a certain extent, measure the force which controls it; we do not know what that force is. So with magnetism. There we have an agency we can observe in action both ways—as an attractive and as a repulsive force. Stimulate an electro-magnet in one way and it will attract iron; stimulate it in another way and it will repel copper, so that a mass of that metal may be visibly levitated and kept floating on nothing, apparently, at some height above the apparatus repelling it. Electricians observe and can reproduce the fact; they do not understand it. The levitation of tables and human beings at spiritual séances can only be observed occasionally and cannot be reproduced at will—not by ordinary observers, at all events—but the fact has to be faced by reasonable men, and brought into

relation with our general thinking. It is stupid to attempt an escape from the difficulty of not understanding it by declaring, in spite of the evidence, that the fact is not a fact.

When, therefore, theosophists learn from those among them in a position to become acquainted with the powers exercised by the adepts of occult science, that such persons can in the present day, as of old, modify the action of the force we call gravity, so as to levitate ordinarily heavy objects like masses of stone, there ought not to be any indignant revolt of the understanding against such a statement. As yet it is impossible to offer the ordinary reader direct evidence to that effect of a kind that is calculated to compel his belief. But the general situation, as I have shown, is such that any positive declaration of disbelief in the allegation can only be due to ignorance or stupidity. Therefore, we who have what we hold to be trustworthy information on the matter may at least put it forward, very careless of scoffing, which, in view of collateral knowledge now available, stands self-condemned as irrational. The adept custodians of that knowledge, concerning the mysteries of Nature, which is filtering into the world at large by degrees as science advances, can and always have been able to control the attractions of matter in such a way as to alter the effective weight of heavy bodies at will. That is the whole explanation of the marvels of megalithic architecture. Working under the guidance and with the help of the adepts from Atlantis, the builders of Stonehenge, and of the ancient " dolmen " altars found the enormous masses of stone they used light enough to be handled with facility. Clairvoyant observers of Stonehenge have seen the process of its construction going on. The pictures of its progress are all indelibly imprinted on the Memory of Nature: they are visible now, as plainly as the actual trans-

actions were visible for those who were present. And the vision shows us the enormous masses of the trilithons being raised to their places with the help of scaffoldings, no more substantial in their character than would be used to day in the erection of a brick cottage.

Of course, although I did not interrupt my narrative of the origin of the pyramids to say so, the great stones of which they are composed were treated in the same way as the materials of Stonehenge. The adepts who directed their construction facilitated the process by the partial levitation of the stones used. This is the simple, though in one way no doubt deeply mysterious, explanation of the old-world monuments in which enormous masses of stone are employed. At the temple of Baalbec, in Syria, there are single stones built into the walls, each of which is calculated to weigh about 1,500 tons. Preferring an explanation of such remains which only seems reasonable because it makes no appeal to forces and powers with which we are unacquainted, archæologists have hitherto been content to assume that, with an unlimited command of human labour, the builders of such temples as that of Baalbec may have been able to get their great stones dragged along causeways on rollers, and may somehow have hoisted them up into their places with the help of inclined planes. Such hypotheses make larger drafts upon credulity really than those involved in the occult statement. They call upon us to believe that which is physically impossible; but the impossibility is acceptable because it is disguised in commonplace phraseology. Stonehenge and Baalbec really stand before us imperishable proofs that, in the age of their construction, whenever that may have been, the world was witness of an engineering which did not accomplish its triumphs by brute strength, but by the application

of a finer knowledge than even modern engineering has as yet recovered.

I have said that it was at a much later period than that at which the Atlantean adepts, who first left the perishing continent, took up their residence in Egypt, that those who settled in Western Europe set on foot the grand and simple spiritual worship which Stonehenge in the first instance was employed to subserve. It was at a much later period even than that at which the pyramids were erected. I do not know whether there was any long residence by Atlantean adepts in Western Europe prior to the introduction of their teaching among the people. Probably there was, but, at all events, it was near the final culmination of the great Atlantean continent's submergence, about 100,000 years ago from the present time, that the grey stones still standing on Salisbury Plain were first established in their places. Among the facts concerning them, which supporters of Fergusson's grotesque theory have to pass over very lightly, is one which relates to the geological character of the stones used. The outer circle and the stones of the great trilithons are of a composition that suggest their derivation from quarries in the neighbourhood. But the inner circle and the altar stone are of a totally different formation, of a kind which cannot be identified with any rockbeds in that part of England. Such stone is to be found in Cornwall, in Wales, and in Ireland, but nowhere nearer. So from one of these regions the materials of the inner circle must certainly have been brought. Reasoning of the kind that is never shocked by an absurdity, but is only offended by the suggestion that modern knowledge does not embrace all the capacities of Nature, is content complacently to suppose that the Stonehenge builders brought the massive materials in question across many hundred miles of primeval forest-covered

country, or, by sea—all for the sake of a battle memorial on Salisbury Plain—when abundant stone, just as good and durable, was to be had in the neighbourhood. The nature of the Stonehenge materials would be alone enough to make the Arthurian theory ridiculous, even if it would bear consideration along other lines of attack. For the purposes of a mystic temple, however, everyone who has a glimmering of occult knowledge will apprehend that there may have been considerations connected with those subtle attributes of different kinds of stone, which occultists generally call their magnetism, that would prescribe the employment of more than one kind.

The worship of the early Druids, to give that name to the occult teachers who made Stonehenge their headquarters, was grandiose and simple. There were processions and chaunts and symbolical ceremonies associated with astronomical events, especially with the rising of the sun on Midsummer Day, when great crowds of people assembled to witness the sun's rays, at the moment of his rising, shoot through an opening opposite to the altar, and illuminate the sacred stone. There were no unholy sacrifices offered on the altar in those days, and the only external ceremony of a sacrificial nature that took place had to do with a libation of milk that was poured over the stone. In accordance with the elaborate symbolism of early occult rites, a great deal of importance was attached to the serpent as an emblem of multifarious significance, and as the adept Druids could easily control these creatures, an actual living serpent was made to glide up into the altar stone at the sunrise ceremony, and lap the milk. There is some truth, but much more misconception, in prevailing notions concerning what is called the "Serpent Worship" of olden times. The failure of modern students of religion to discriminate between worship and the use of symbols

has had to do with graver misconceptions even than those which have entangled the commonplace interpretations of serpent worship.

The chief Druid of the Stonehenge ceremonies in the days of the pure worship in the beginning used to march in some of the processions with a live serpent round his neck. Later on, when the adept influence was no longer present—many millenniums later—the degraded chiefs of the Druid decadence used to keep up the old tradition in so far as it lay in them to do so, but for prudential reasons wore a *dead* serpent—a more fitting emblem than they supposed of the state of the faith they represented. Lower and lower its practices became debased, until the once sacred altar stone was deluged no longer with milk, but with the blood of human victims, and this was the only sort of Druid worship of which, through Roman historians, we have any written records. How did it happen that so terrible a change came on? The age apparently, as far as ancient Britain was concerned, was not sufficiently advanced to provide the earlier adepts with a continuous line of successors. Eventually, it is to be presumed, one by one, no doubt, the earlier adepts ceased to incarnate among the people they could not lead on to the path of true spiritual progress. In Egypt the graft they planted took a firm hold of the stock to which it was attached. In Britain it did not, and thus, while Egypt remained to a comparatively recent period a land of high civilization, and one of the principal centres of fifth-race adeptship, Britain relapsed back into barbarism. Up to only a few thousand years before the Roman conquest it remained still faintly tinged with the remote traditions of its vanishing civilization, then it sank to its lowest condition of decay before the commencement of its modern cycle of progress within the historic period.

This sweeping survey of a past that will be more fully recalled, no doubt, in progress of time, as the world learns better to appreciate the inner faculties of man, slight and sketchy though it be, has only been rendered possible by much patient gleaning on my part, opportunities being made use of as they arose. It is possible at a later date that I may be able to fill up some details, but I hope the imperfect suggestions of this essay may meanwhile be accepted as contributing in some measure to show how imperatively necessary it is to bring the Atlantean origin of all civilizations belonging to our age into the scheme of our thinking, if we are to hope for anything resembling a correct interpretation of the ancient world.

## THEOSOPHICAL TEACHINGS LIABLE TO BE MISUNDERSTOOD

IN the beginning of our theosophical studies we had to be content with very crude conceptions concerning the great ideas to which we were then introduced. It was not possible for those who were endeavouring to teach us to convey to us, all at once, a comprehension of those higher planes of nature some understanding of which is absolutely necessary to a correct appreciation of even some fundamental principles that we have to deal with. Indeed, that embarrassment has, it seems to me, impeded all attempts at metaphysical thought that have antedated the theosophical movement. Intensely keen intellectual activity has been devoted to the effort to penetrate "the Veil of Isis," to outstrip the range of the physical senses, to determine the nature of matter, and to analyze processes of thought. But it has all amounted to very little as compared with the flood of significant teaching that we have been able to obtain during the theosophical period. With the help of this, by degrees, it has come to pass that, in spite of the enormous difficulty of grappling in imagination with conditions of consciousness outside those with which we are familiar, we have gradually been able to surround some of the earlier teaching with illumination which invests it with fuller meaning than we could attach to it at first. We have thus come to realize that some of our earlier conceptions, though not erroneous—indeed, no teaching that I have had to do with, as given to us in the beginning, need at this

later date be withdrawn as erroneous—were incomplete to that extent that they have given rise to misunderstandings; and the attempt to clear up some of those misunderstandings is the task on which I am now venturing to enter.

Foremost amongst theosophical teachings liable to be misunderstood—for want of adequate comprehension concerning conditions of life hereafter and on higher planes—stands that fundamental idea, Reincarnation, the great law which from the earliest beginnings of theosophical study we have realized as an essential principle of evolution. Not only among theosophists has the idea been appreciated. It is even surprising, considering how much there is in the idea to excite repugnance on the part of people who do not understand it properly, that it has made way to the extent that we have seen, gradually conquering acceptance more widely than theosophical teaching does this generally. It has frequently been defended in pulpits as not incompatible with ordinary religious teaching; it has been accepted by people quite outside the range of theosophical influence, as the only possible explanation of what seems the terrible injustice reigning in the world—the mysterious inequalities of condition that we see around us, the differences not merely of welfare, but of moral and intellectual development, of environment, and so forth, which render human life so painfully variegated. But theoretical acceptance of the idea has not always rendered it welcome to people who want to realize precisely how the law will work when they come to be reincarnated, who are troubled with anxieties in that way that render the whole conception exceedingly repulsive. They persist in thinking of *themselves* as plunged afresh into babyhood, as coming back with the consciousness they are now invested with, to be again subject to the appalling limitations of the infant

condition. They think of themselves as fretting against the limitations of the baby state, wearily enduring their slow progress towards maturity. We have to get rid of all such ideas absolutely and entirely before we understand what reincarnation means, and the first difficulty in the way of getting rid of them, has to do with the distinction between the personality of any given life and the Ego of which that personality is a temporary expression.

As we approach an understanding of this distinction a new difficulty is apt to spring up. When told that the personality of any given life is going to be merged in the Ego—as we are definitely assured will be the case as a rule—to the extent that the details of the last life will fade by degrees from memory, that seems to imply something resembling the annihilation of personal consciousness, the only kind which seems real, as contemplated from the physical plane point of view. The same comfortless thought surrounds a mistaken conception that has sometimes been put forward in regard to the ultimate destinies of humanity at the conclusion of the Manvantara, the alleged re-absorption in that Divinity out of which in the beginning humanity emerged. Of course, if personalities even remotely resembling what they are now were absorbed into Divinity, as a drop of water is absorbed in the ocean, that would be equivalent to annihilation, and mergence in the Ego when the personality is passing on from this life to another seems, again, a species of annihilation, for most people unable to escape, in imagination, from the conditions of the current personality.

Now what we have to remember, first of all, in order to get rid of that misconception, is that protracted and vivid conditions of life intervene between the disappearance from this plane of any given personality and the next presentation of the Ego

on the physical plane in accordance with the law of rebirth. A very long interval elapses before the personality with which we are associated in any given life has accomplished its mergence in the Ego. I have dealt to some extent with that subject on former occasions, but it requires continued attention. Remember that, first of all, we have a considerably protracted experience, which may extend to enormous length sometimes—of life in which the personality is maintained in full completeness on the higher levels of the astral plane. In a large number of cases people whose personalities have been highly evolved, and who represented great intellectual development in this life, elect to remain on the higher levels of the astral plane for long after the time when they might have passed on to Manasic conditions, had they so chosen, because under those conditions it is possible for them to gather fresh knowledge along the line of their previous work, and prepare themselves in their next incarnation for much more extended activities of a similar order. In a minor degree the same explanation applies to people of less advanced evolution, though we have to remember, in trying to think out the conditions of future life, that they vary to an almost illimitable extent. It is difficult in attempting to interpret any of these mysteries to make adequate allowance for that. Whereas highly intellectual people will elect to remain for a long time on the higher level, people of lesser advancement also, assuming that their lives have not been very bad indeed, will long remain on levels where life is exceedingly enjoyable, though not necessarily in such cases very conducive to further progress. But in all cases there comes a time when, in fulfilment of the necessities of further evolution, all the inhabitants of the astral world must pass on to the Manasic condition. We must not think of this passage as in

the nature of a second death. It is quite free from all the anxieties and distrust that, too often, embitter the approach of physical dissolution, and it is hardly necessary to say utterly free from the suffering so often attending departure from this plane. During astral life a good many of the attributes that contributed to make up the personality have faded away. Its higher emotions, its love energies, its intellectual capacities remain unimpaired, but it has already shed most of the minor attachments arising from its earthly life. It is getting ready for that union with the Ego which must *not* be thought of as accomplished at once on leaving this plane of life. Whatever desires may have been engendered for the continuance of personal existence, those desires will operate to retain vivid consciousness of personality on appropriate levels of nature for as long as their force can persist. But, as I say, the Ego, the real permanent self, is a more permanent thing than any one personality, and, however important any given personality may be compared with those that have preceded it in the long career of the Ego through nature, its importance has to be expressed in a new environment, to clear the way for which the minor details of the last incarnation have been allowed to fade away, or evaporate. But the Ego and the personality must not be thought of as two separate entities. The personality is, at all events, a partial expression of the Ego and, sooner or later, the Earth-plane consciousness is withdrawn into the Ego, sometimes rapidly, sometimes after a long interval, but eventually in all cases that has to be accomplished. And the blending means the absorption into the Ego of all that was important in the personality that has lately been spent.

There is another interesting thought connected with that idea. Sooner or later a personality may become so important that it is perpetuated, so to

speak, and invests the Ego with its own colouring, instead of assuming from the Ego the colouring of former accumulated experiences. That, of course, will only happen at the threshold of a very exalted condition of development, and it does not apply to the majority of people at the present stage of our life.

I must now go back for a moment to the misunderstanding about baby consciousness. It is quite possible that some of you may have read accounts of strange experiences that have sometimes been known in the Eastern world—I am thinking especially of some cases in Tibet—where babies who have been recognized as reincarnations of a former incarnation have actually been able to prove their identity by pointing out hiding places in which the former personality had stowed away various objects, with a view to its ultimate identification. And, in some cases, the actual baby form has uttered words identifying itself with the former incarnation. That need not be thought of as conflicting with what I just now said. Whenever that has taken place—and I believe it has taken place; I do not want to repudiate the stories—it would represent a great adept achievement from the background, so that it may be set aside altogether as inapplicable to ordinary life. And almost equally inapplicable to ordinary life are the cases in which very young children, before the age of seven, have been known to exhibit extraordinary faculties. I think these have generally had to do with the reincarnation of great musicians. We are all familiar with the precocity of Mozart, who is said to have begun playing the piano at six years of age. In reference to these one can only say again that they are altogether abnormal. Merely guessing at the previous conditions that might explain such cases, I would suggest that they represent an intense

eagerness on the part of the Ego to express, on the physical plane, some of the musical ideas gathered from experience on the Manasic level. We have always been led to believe that on the Manasic level music somehow pervades the whole region, appealing, of course, in very varying degrees to different aptitudes, but filling the consciousness of the advanced musician with musical ideas he would be eager to reproduce. Probably in a similar way, when the mathematical faculty has become the leading mental characteristic of an Ego, that condition may equally impel the Ego to seek an early opportunity for its expression on the physical plane, and may account for the " calculating boys " one has sometimes heard of; though we have in connection with such cases to explain, the best way we can, the usual fact that the abnormal faculty disappears or weakens as the boy grows up. Such facts bring us into relation with a great volume of Nature's mysteries, which show how, at early stages of evolution, there seems to be a closer connection with the spiritual plane than when fuller intellectual development has been reached. Babies, animals, and early savage tribes will sometimes give evidence of possessing glimmerings, at all events, of astral perception which fade away at later stages of growth.

I come now to consider various possibilities which have to do with the re-attachment of the Ego to a bodily manifestation. In the case of Egos sufficiently advanced along the path of that progress to which knowledge is so conducive, it may be possible for the higher self, if I may use that expression, or the Ego—I am using the two terms as almost synonymous —to exercise a definite choice in regard to the new incarnation on which it will enter. People already at some stage " on the path," especially if they are called upon to return rather sooner than the ordinary

law would provide for, would probably have a considerable range of choice in regard to the incarnation they would accept. I have been privileged to obtain some information bearing upon cases that have actually occurred, and a curious discovery emerges. In all such cases of which I have heard, where several opportunities have lain before an Ego coming into incarnation—some apparently very much less attractive than others—it seems almost invariably the case that the Ego chooses the least desirable incarnation, as its desirability would be measured from our point of view. Incarnations in humble life involving a great deal of what, from our point of view, we should consider hardship and undesirable conditions have continually, within my knowledge, been chosen by people of sufficient advancement to exercise a choice, in preference to those representing more agreeable conditions of life on this plane. From the Ego point of view nothing is of really any importance compared with spiritual growth and progress, and it may not infrequently happen that the humbler incarnation is, first of all, calculated to get rid of Karma that lies in the background, while it also not infrequently happens that the humbler incarnation is distinctly more conducive to devotion to spiritual thought and effort than those where pleasures and distractions of all kinds keep people's thoughts centred on the life that they are actually leading. And again it may happen—though I am now about to speak of a case that is probably unique—that some definite work that a highly evolved Ego has undertaken can be better carried out in a humble than in an exalted station of life. Most students of philosophical literature will be more or less familiar with the writings of that wonderful German philosopher Jacob Boehme. Now Jacob Boehme's writings show him to have been on the threshold,

at all events, of high Adeptship, and yet in that life he was a humble cobbler, just a subordinate worker at that humble trade. Why did he choose such an incarnation as that?—for it is certain that a Being on his level must have chosen his incarnation. The answer I understand to be that at the period in which he lived it was not desirable that the teachings he had to put forward—real theosophic teachings, though not illustrated with the amplitude of detail we have since been privileged to obtain—should descend upon the world from any altitude of authority. Only a few were ripe for them. It was held to be necessary that they should be suggested, so to speak, from a humble level of mundane authorship. I am not presuming to endorse or criticize that idea. I merely state it as given to me in explanation of the Jacob Boehme incarnation. "But why," I asked, "such a very ignoble position as that of a working cobbler?" The answer, I believe derived from himself, was—"No position can be ignoble in which you are fulfilling the purpose of the Logos." That seems to me to have been an extremely beautiful answer, radiant with meaning that can be applied to many of the phenomena of life. True, there are not many working cobblers who are Jacob Boehmes in disguise, and we must not be hurried into conclusions to the effect that it is only on such levels of life that great spiritual natures are to be sought for. Indeed, the normal rule is rather the other way about. There is a tendency in Nature to a gradual upward drift in social station in the long progress of incarnations. This ensues from the way in which desire, in ordinary life, is one of the factors making up the next Karmic programme. The desire must be clear and definite to be operative in this way, and it would not amount to much if a costermonger desired to be a king. He would not know enough about the king's life to desire that

with precision, nor even if his desire pointed to a less exalted station could it be definite enough to have a Karmic value. But he may fully realize the conditions of life a little better than those he might be used to, and then the desire assumes creative force, always supposing the man does not engender, in other directions, bad Karma that conflicts with his desire. But all these last remarks obviously apply to levels of life below those inspired by genuine spiritual aspiration. When this is sufficiently developed for the Ego to feel it as his predominant motive, it sweeps away all minor ambitions.

So, as I say, on the higher levels choice enters into this matter. When it does not enter—which is the case with the vast majority of our fellow-creatures—the guidance is accomplished again in various ways. For those sufficiently advanced, but not on the path, there are Divine beings in the higher order of the great adept hierarchy whose function it is to direct incarnations and actually guide each Ego, with a perception of its spiritual needs, into the incarnation suitable for its further expression. On a lower level again, if we go back to the conditions of savage life, or even to the conditions of very humble life in civilized countries—well, the truth is, as I have definitely been told, for a great many Egos, that anyone of fifty incarnations would do equally well, and therefore there is no specific individual guidance in such cases. You will always remember that the human race is a vast procession proceeding through the ages, the members of which represent very different conditions of growth and progress, very different claims upon the authority which rules the whole. Let us consider the course of events in the case of an ordinary Ego representing civilized development, a certain amount of progress along the lines of evolution and intelligence, and so forth, but no abnormal spiritual growth. Such an

Ego will be drafted into an appropriate incarnation under pressure of forces of which it has no practical consciousness, and for a long time will be unconscious of having re-entered this plane of life at all. There is a link established between itself and the new life—we do not know what terms to use, physical plane nature does not enable us to handle phrases which suit these conditions—but some mysterious magnetic thread or tie attaches the Ego to the new birth, and for a long time it is quite unconscious of any such attachment—unconscious probably for at least seven years. The first seven years of a child's life do not represent intelligent consciousness within that organism. Perhaps that statement will shock enthusiastic mothers who believe that from a very early age they detect all sorts of charming attributes in their offspring. They may, but I do maintain from what I have been told that as far as the real Ego consciousness is concerned it is not really active within the child until at least seven years have been spent, and then only to a very limited degree. Then, no doubt, the Ego will be conscious of its re-attachment to the physical plane, but not conscious to any extent which is a serious impediment to its spiritual consciousness on higher planes. It will not be until another septenary period has been passed—for these septenary periods have a very definite significance in connection with the growth of new lives—it is not until another stage of distinct progress has been accomplished that the etheric and astral elements in the new child's composition become identified with the Ego in the background. I am not going to attempt a very minute explanation of the successive stages through which Nature works in bringing an Ego into a new incarnation, but the two septenary periods that I have mentioned are by no means all that are recognizable as stages in the process. The

real truth I believe to be that it is not until full maturity is reached, not till such an age as twenty-eight, or even a later period than that, that the highest elements in the Ego are capable of functioning in the new organism. I believe, even as far as the period of thirty-five, it may sometimes be said that the new incarnation is not absolutely in its completely perfected condition. So that no conception of this subject can be more wide of the truth than that which embarrasses the idea of reincarnation with the belief that, in the earlier stages, the experience is distressing to the entity coming back.

One or two other thoughts still remain to be emphasized in connection with this process of reincarnation. A great deal was said in earlier writings on the subject of Devachan, and later interpretations have modified without contradicting what was said in the beginning. There are numerous cases in which Devachan is little more than a blissful idleness in which the personality that has passed from this life into the Devachan state, exists in a perfectly happy condition for as long a period as the energies created or brought into activity during the past life are capable of manifesting themselves on a higher plane. In all such cases the mergence into the Ego is effected unconsciously. All such processes are guided by higher intelligence outside that of the Ego itself, and it would only be in a very advanced condition indeed that the Ego would be perfectly conscious of what it was doing as it gradually absorbed into itself the experiences of the last life. You have always to remember that on the highest conditions that men are capable of reaching we take our destinies into our own hands; on intermediate conditions they are guided for us by beings of a high order in the hierarchy supervising human affairs, and on much lower levels, what we may call the common levels of nature, operating in a vast

area, they are guided for us by beings of a lower order in the spiritual hierarchy.

A good deal was said in the beginning of our studies in reference to the periods which usually elapse between incarnations. In my own first book on the subject, those who have read it may remember that I spoke—under guidance of course—of the intervening period which applied to the average of mankind, as running from 1,500 to 2,000 years, during which, of course, life was divided between astral conditions and Devachanic or Manasic conditions. Only after this .very ample scope had been given for the exhaustion of all the forces of the previous life did the entity come back into incarnation. There was nothing untrue in that statement at the time, but a very remarkable condition of things has arisen since that statement was put forward. We live in a very remarkable period, remarkable not merely for its extraordinary development of theosophical knowledge amongst us in the world at large, but in other ways as well, and amongst other features that are remarkable in this period is the extraordinary acceleration of all processes which have to do with human evolution. I think we have many of us noticed this acceleration as applied to the phenomena of life around us, even in reference to the changes that have been going on on the physical plane. Looking back over the past fifty years we see that immense progress has been made in science, in discovery, in moral development, in religious thought all over the world; and that acceleration has been going on with even greater rapidity and energy on the higher planes of nature. It has to do, of course, with the difference between the downward and the upward arcs of evolution. On the downward arc of evolution—the great preparatory process of nature—progress is slow; on the upper arc of the cycle it is quick, and we are beginning now, having turned the

corner as regards this world period, to feel the accelerating influence of the upward arc of evolution; and the accelerating influence, I am told, has definitely operated within the last thirty years, to accelerate the return to incarnation of such people as we are talking about when we speak of civilized communities. I leave out of account those who are on the Path; a condition that probably applies to a good many of my readers, whether they are fully aware of it or not, most likely to a majority of those who take a real, deep and serious interest in theosophical teaching. They come under the operation of a new law altogether, and their incarnation may be accelerated far beyond any such periods as we have been talking about. But dealing with the general run of civilized mankind, the acceleration is producing this effect: for a considerable number of advanced Egos in the civilized world, a period of only about three hundred years is now going to be an average period for the intervening time between two lives. For a larger number representing, of course, a somewhat less evolved condition of either spiritual or intellectual growth, a seven hundred year period is going to be the average, and for probably a still larger number representing normal conditions of ordinary life a thousand year period is going to be the average instead of that fifteen hundred year period which prevailed during the earlier part of the last century.

We all heard a great deal at the beginning of theosophical work of the wonderful drift of knowledge from the Eastern world to the West. *Ex oriente lux* is the most familiar maxim connected with theosophical study and one which represents a profound truth. But as so many other things have changed in the process of time, a change is coming over the whole condition of what may roughly be called the occult world in incarnation. By that I mean the

whole body of people who are moving in the direction of higher knowledge, who are gradually coming in considerable numbers on to what we call the path leading to the higher life, who are coming to appreciate the openings of knowledge that have been available for us in recent years. In former times such people were more numerous in the Eastern than in the Western world; and the consequence used to be that incarnations drifted, in the case of people with distinct spiritual aspiration, from the Western world to the Eastern. Indeed, when our theosophical teaching began to excite interest here, I know that some of my own friends aspired to Eastern incarnations as probably conducive to more rapid spiritual growth than could be accomplished in any other way. That idea I think was an erroneous aspiration so far as it applied to any people within our own lifetime, though not erroneous in times long gone by. But now it is distinctly out of date. The drift of incarnation for those who represent exalted conditions of preparedness for higher things, is now rather from the East to the West. The truth of the matter is that, although we are so far only concerned with beginnings, the Western world is going, in by no means a remote future, to be the great radial centre from which spiritual influence will spread over the civilized world; and therefore, as I say, at the present time such an aspiration as that which I referred to a while ago as operative with some of my earlier friends in connection with theosophical study, the desire for Eastern incarnations, is wholly out of date. What we have to do now is to recognize the duties that are gradually coming to be incumbent on the Western world in connection with the spiritual progress of mankind.

Looking back to the beginning of civilization, to the Atlantean period, when there was not any Europe

to talk about at all, all the development, such as it was, both spiritual and intellectual, was centred in the Atlantean world. Of course the Atlantean population gradually spread over the whole of the habitable globe, and all that we now speak of as the Eastern world was, please to remember, once Atlantean. Earlier sub-races of the Atlantean period accounted for the earliest populations, whether of India, of any part of Central Asia, or of any part of the Eastern world, and as the spiritual civilization of Atlantis became defiled by the growth of evil in the shape of what we commonly call black tendencies, so the best representatives of advanced Atlantean spirituality migrated eastward, and in that way established in the Eastern world the great radiating centre of spiritual energy in days gone by. And that condition of things lasted for a very long while. Of course at a period which again is a very long while ago from our point of view, two or three hundred thousand years ago, when Atlantean adepts migrating from Atlantis proper to escape the evil developments of its civilization, established themselves in Egypt, they met another stream of spiritual civilization flowing westward from India and regions beyond India that had been engendered, so to speak, by the fermentation of loftier thought in the earlier races of the Atlantean period. Thus when Atlantis ultimately disappeared and was destroyed by reason of the fact that it had become so utterly degraded, you have to think of the Eastern world as wholly representative of spiritual growth. But we also have to recognize as an absolute fact that in the progress of sub-racial development later sub-races than any of those which now occupy the Eastern world have been developed and evolved in what is now the Western world. So now the great wave of spirituality is sweeping back again towards the West. *Ex oriente lux!* From the East the light

is coming. But the very use of that phrase indicates that it is moving westward. Some Western Americans are fond of a boastful expression: "Westward the Star of Empires takes its way." I am not concerned for the moment with the Star of Empire—but westward the great forces of spiritual energy and development are distinctly moving. And we have to be worthy, as it were, of that condition of things; we have to rise to meet it.

If we properly appreciate our functions, they are much more dignified than at the first glance people believe. The Theosophical Society is charged with the great task of leading spiritual progress in the Western world. The Society is a nucleus which in future generations, at no very distant period, will be enormously expanded beyond its present conditions, expanded let us trust by virtue of the fact that those who are now concerned with it will appreciate the duties incumbent on them, and act in a manner which may pave the way for that further development which undoubtedly is contemplated by Higher Powers as the programme of the future. That can be carried out if we can respond adequately to the influence that they are radiating.

That is the most important thought that I have to deal with just now, but there are one or two other minor matters having to do with misconceptions or misunderstandings of theosophical teaching, which seem trivial and almost trumpery compared with those which I have been talking about, but which none the less claim notice. I am referring to views which are sometimes put forward, connecting aspirations for spiritual growth and progress with questions relating to what we eat and drink or refrain from eating and drinking. Now this is a very delicate subject which has been a good deal discussed by theosophical writers lately, and in reference to which

I am very anxious not to be misunderstood myself by theosophical friends. No one can entertain a more definitely appreciative admiration for what may roughly be called superior or cleaner modes of life, as compared with those of the multitude, than I myself; but I do venture to say—and I say it on authority that I respect—that however beautiful in its conception purer diet may be, that "perfect way in diet" that Mrs. Kingsford so admirably wrote about many years ago has nothing to do with spiritual progress. That is all that I am driving at. Do not let people who, whether for reasons of health, convenience, family environment, or for any other reasons worthy of consideration, find it difficult to adopt the rules of the perfect way in diet—do not let them suppose that in any way they are prejudicing their spiritual growth by disregarding them. That is all I am emphasizing. The all-important consideration in regard to physical life—I am not speaking now of the moral attributes that should guide our conduct in life—our all-important duty in regard to the physical instrument with which we have to work when we are trying to do the right thing in this life, is that we should keep it in health. And at the present time, when most of our bodies—not our Egos, but most of our bodies—may have come down through a line of heredity familiarized with the old-fashioned diet, it does not always happen that the present representatives of that line can be healthy on an entirely new *régime*. That is the important point to remember. Your duty, so to speak, to the body is to keep it in health, and you must determine for yourself what particular course of life in regard to this matter of eating and drinking is best calculated to have that effect. I have made efforts to get information on this subject from exalted teachers. I think I have succeeded, and of course what I have been saying to you is the outcome of such success.

Going more into detail, it may be recognized that in a certain very limited sense it is true that what, for want of a better term, we call " magnetism " of a bad order does attach to meat as a food. It has a very slight influence, and I am told that those who look on from a higher plane at the efforts of some vegetarian thinkers to follow the perfect way in diet, are rather amused to see that they ignore this question of magnetism as between various kinds of vegetable food. If there is any point in the idea that certain foods have a bad magnetism, then certain kinds of vegetable foods have a bad magnetism to just the same extent as meat, and in neither case does that matter seriously. The same thing applies to alcohol with slightly greater emphasis. And again the question is whether physical heredity is of such an order as to render any particular body incapable of maintaining health and efficiency for whatever work it has to do, without some little of that otherwise undesirable beverage.

One other theory claims notice in this connection—that which relates to the habit of smoking. Let nobody be under the impression—if they are inclined to attach any importance to the information I have been privileged to obtain—that there is any harm in that practice in regard to the conditions it engenders in the physical body, in reference to health, to spiritual or moral progress, or to any of the loftier duties of life. It is perfectly harmless; it has no bad effect on astral or etheric conditions—in moderation of course. We always assume that we are talking to people who are not going to extremes in the pursuit of any pleasures of a physical order. But within reasonable limits that particular practice, I am told, has rather a beneficial effect than otherwise on the etheric conditions of people who live in modern communities, full of astral swirls of all kinds and of a

complicated order. There remains only one other remark to make on this subject, that of course in reference to smoking, however agreeable and innocent it may be in itself, nobody who is thinking along the lines that are probably operative with theosophical students would dream of doing anything of that kind in a manner which would be disagreeable to others. That is just the clue to the correct understanding of this matter. It hinges on to very much loftier principles, because the idea that we should do nothing for our own sake which is injurious to the comfort or welfare of other people is a crude way of putting the fundamental conception which has to do with spiritual progress in all its aspects. We are not segregated atoms in consciousness, living only for our individual selves; we are simply parts of a stupendous design, the identity of ourselves with which at some future period we shall fully realize, as we may now even intellectually appreciate it. That idea can never be misunderstood, because of its utter simplicity. Simple on this plane, it is equally simple and equally true on planes above, and is the one idea which, if it thoroughly saturates our understanding, and becomes the guide of life and action, will render people theosophists in the truest acceptation of the term.

## THE SUPER-PHYSICAL LAWS OF NATURE

To speak of the change which has come over the public mind, or that portion of the public mind which represents the advanced culture of the period, as a movement of thought, is, in truth, to use an inadequate expression, for that movement is largely due to an inflow of new knowledge and information concerning the super-physical mysteries of nature, which were not at the disposal of those who, in the middle of the last century, represented the incredulity which then prevailed in reference to all matters having to do with mystic research. Those of us whose memories stretch back to the middle of the last century will remember how determined and contemptuous that incredulity generally was. To attain any knowledge concerning super-physical states of human consciousness was held to be eternally impossible. Sporadic phenomena, reported from time to time as indicating that it *might* be possible to obtain communication with the surviving consciousness of people who had departed this life, were treated as though of necessity they represented imposture and fraud. Stories of clairvoyance, and records of curious results obtained by mesmerism, fortune-telling, in all its curious varieties, whether concerned with cards, palmistry, or astrology, and all the confused traditions of medieval magic, were lumped up together as representing ignorant superstition. The Science of the period, dealing exclusively with the phenomena of matter—with theories that could be substantiated by physical experiment—was en-

throned in public esteem, not merely, as it deserved, by reason of representing a magnificent development of human intelligence, but as expressive of finality in regard to human knowledge; not finality along the lines of its own activity, but finality as regards the character of such knowledge, held to be necessarily limited by the resources of physical sense. Philosophy even, vaguely conscious of something beyond the characteristics of matter, did not hesitate to describe whatever lay beyond the reach of physical research as "unknowable," and those who ventured to attempt the exploration of the unseen or intangible mysteries of Nature, did so at the expense of being treated with contempt by the orthodox opinion of their time.

But without stopping to trace the steps by which the great change has been brought about, what is the actual state of things which we have now to recognize as distinguishing the thought of our own period? To begin with, those who feel themselves in possession of certain knowledge to the effect that it is possible to communicate with those who have passed on to other states of existence, are to be counted by millions both in Europe and America. Their conviction does not imply that it is always possible to command such communication in individual cases. The laws relating to all such methods are, as yet, but imperfectly understood; but the broad certainty that, under some circumstances, such communication is possible, is enough to establish the main principle that human consciousness survives the change called death, and it is impossible to overrate the value of the widespread conviction to that effect permeating our civilization, in which the progress of physical science was tending in the opposite direction, while the influence of religious teaching was insufficient to counteract that tendency. Concurrently with the growth of confidence in the main idea repre-

sented by spiritualism, the various manifestations of Nature's finer forces operative amongst those still in physical life have been steadily securing attention. Psychic research became, by degrees, not merely emancipated from the intolerance it formerly encountered, but has been gradually established amongst us as almost a fashionable pursuit. Mesmerism, so fiercely flouted in the beginning, became recognized, in some of its aspects, at all events, as a curative agent in some conditions of disease, and though ill-understood as yet by those who only know it under the modern and misleading designation "hypnotism," is actually recognized as a system of treatment by many orthodox practitioners. And, sharing in the growing changes of opinion, the fascination of fortune-telling in all its varieties has proved only too attractive to many enthusiasts of our generation. Finally we have to recognize that in the scientific world itself, a few, at all events, of those most distinguished in research, and many indeed beside those who have had the courage to acknowledge their conviction, are conscious already that they are standing on the threshold of a new scientific dispensation, in which super-physical laws and super-physical faculties must be made available by those whose destiny it may be to expound the natural philosophy of the future. Problems connected with the ether, the electron, and unseen emanations from the Sun, credited with the production of those curious phenomena known as magnetic storms, are all of them imperatively in need of illumination of a kind that can only be derived from super-physical investigation. The present situation is full of promise for developments, at no distant future, which will involve in the embrace of recognized science the resources and achievements of occultism.

That is the change that has taken place within the last five and twenty or thirty years. Beyond the

influence of spiritualism, to which I have already referred, what are the other influences which have brought it about?

I am not eager to claim credit in any exclusive degree or to any predominant extent for the literature which, within the period to which I refer, has been devoted to the exposition of that teaching generally known as Theosophy, but it would be affectation to suppose that the change has not been attributable, in some measure, to the wide diffusion of that clearly-defined, coherent, scientific interpretation of a vast body of natural law relating to human evolution which the literature of Theosophy has put at the disposal of the cultured world since that system of teaching was first formulated in approximate detail. Whether it has been the cause or the effect of the great change in modern thought which I have been endeavouring to trace, no one who has adequately studied theosophical teaching will deny that for the first time in the overt history of human enlightenment it presents us with a complete theory of life; reaching back to its beginnings, reaching forward to its possibilities, and incidentally foreshadowing the ultimate synthesis into a complete science of super-physical nature, of all the miscellaneous phenomena with which psychic research is concerned. Spiritualism established the reality of a future life, but aimed, I venture to think, as regards its original inspiration, at nothing more. Occult research, independently of spiritualism, has established the fact that human consciousness, still expressed in incarnation, has resources at its disposal far transcending in their significance the senses of the physical body. Theosophy, accepting and interpreting these conclusions, has illuminated, for our benefit, the whole scheme of human evolution, the laws governing spiritual progress, the possibilities awaiting mankind in a remote future, the continuity of life in successive

manifestations on this physical plane of existence, and the growth of the soul, under the influence of the experience which those successive manifestations afford. No hurried phrases of this nature can adequately convey to minds, as yet unfamiliar with the literature of Theosophy, a complete comprehension of its sublime significance. But in truth the teaching itself, when properly understood, enables us to realize that everyone who aspires sooner or later to realize the potentialities of human progress, must absorb that teaching into his consciousness as a necessary preparation for the efforts he will be called upon to make, in connection with his ulterior development.

This statement may seem extravagant, but will be readily appreciated by those who have studied, with any degree of earnestness, the fundamental principles of human evolution rendered apparent by the teaching of the Higher Occultism. Ignoring detail, we are able to perceive the whole scheme of human evolution as divided into two mighty halves, during the first of which the forces of Nature carry forward the human Ego to a stage of development fairly represented by the average culture of our own time. But the subtle forces generated by the Ego itself are essential to ulterior progress during the second great half of the evolutionary period, and these cannot be brought into activity without a clear comprehension of the design they are intended to subserve. To the half-way period of the whole journey, Nature brings us without claiming any help from ourselves; the next half of the journey can only be accomplished by the union of our own enlightened will with the forces which Nature will still contribute to assist us in our upward growth.

The phrase I have employed as the title of this essay may not at once be intelligible, but if I had not shrunk from expanding it to inconvenient length,

I should have rendered it more unintelligible still by employing the words used with a double signification, proposing to deal, not merely with the super-physical aspect of natural forces, but also with the natural aspect of super-physical forces. The inversion of the phrase may not at once convey a specific meaning, but I venture to think that before I have done its significance will be clearly appreciated, and in order that what I have to say may be at once intelligible in its bearing on the main idea, let me explain very concisely at the outset the conclusions I shall endeavour to reach.

I want to show, first of all, that the forces with which we are all familiar, in their relationship with matter, the laws of Nature as they are commonly called, can only be correctly understood if we think of them as the expression of Divine Will consciously operating to produce the effects we observe, and, secondly, that while the effects we observe, in connection with the consequences of action—with all that has to do with our appreciation of right and wrong, good and evil, and moral principle—can readily enough be associated with the idea of Divine Will, embodying sanction or disapproval, they are none the less to be recognized as a vast department of natural law, which, though dealing with resources of a super-physical nature beyond the reach of experimental research, constitute none the less a department of natural law as uniform and definite as those which have to do with the behaviour of matter.

We find ourselves in this world, under conditions which enable us to recognize it as an arena of spiritual evolution; but it is even more obviously an arena of a complicated system of law relating to physical matter, and in reference to this great body of law we may even extend our observation beyond the limits within which, as a rule, I think it wise to confine our

attention. In presence of attempts sometimes made to interpret or speculate concerning the origin and Divine government of the whole universe, I have often ventured to suggest that it is unwise to do more than endeavour to comprehend the origin and purpose of our own Solar System. At the best, in reference to that, we can never hope to do more than obtain fragmentary conceptions, and dimly to picture in the mind the story of its origin and the theory of its final perfection. But in reference to physical law we are enabled to perceive that the code which is manifestly operative in the Solar System is certainly, to some extent—possibly in its entirety—applicable to the innumerable systems distributed through the infinitudes of space. It is certain, for example, that the fundamental law of gravitation, governing all masses of matter within our view, is also operative in distant systems of a wholly different order where a dual or multiple system of Suns can be distinctly observed as obedient to the law which governs the motion of our own planets in their orbits. And beyond this the resources of spectroscopic observation enable us to identify, in distant Suns, some of the varieties under which matter manifests itself to us in our laboratories, and to speculate, not unreasonably, on the probability that the so-called chemical elements with which we are acquainted here are also the materials of which distant Solar Systems are constructed, and which, most probably, are obedient in such systems to the same laws of chemical affinity that we are enabled to investigate in handling those elements on earth. The value of this observation has to do, of course, with the manner in which it tends to suggest an otherwise unrecognizable unity in the whole cosmos, even if it is hardly profitable for us to pursue that idea much farther. But whether we think of the natural laws affecting matter in their cosmic or in their

more limited aspect, we cannot but be equally driven to the conclusion that the Divine Power, which builds up definite worlds and systems, impresses on the complex organisms thus created the characteristics they exhibit when the creation is accomplished.

Along the lines of ordinary astronomical speculation, as also by the light of esoteric teaching, we are enabled to formulate a broad conception of the manner in which the worlds of a system like our own are built up by the aggregation in the first instance of relatively homogeneous matter available throughout space. Astronomy deals with the development of Suns and planets, from nebulæ; occult teaching follows along somewhat the same path, though going back a little earlier in the story, and recognizing the formation of the nebulæ as the result of Divine Will operating on the infinite expanse of etheric substance. But whether we imagine that by virtue of laws pervading the Universe, etheric matter when aggregated into physical molecules is inherently invested with the power of endowing those molecules with the attributes we recognize in the chemical elements, or whether we imagine a Will which, by the first hypothesis, emanates from some cosmic influence, to be reproduced by the will of the Divine Power to which our system is directly due, the same conclusion emerges from either hypothesis. The attributes of matter, constituting in their entirety that which we describe as the laws of Nature, are the expression of Divine Will, either consciously operating throughout the Universe directly, or indirectly passed on through the will of the Divine Beings to whom the existence of each Solar System is due. And apart from the general force of reasonable speculation along these lines, I have been incidentally assured that clairvoyant observation of a high order will confirm this conclusion in a curious and interesting way.

To render this suggestion intelligible we must remember, of course, that wherever we speak of Divine Will operating in regions of Nature within our own purview, we have to understand that it operates through a vast hierarchy of subordinate agency. Such agency has, of course, to be recognized as associated with varieties of spiritual evolution quite independent of the human kingdom; and in dealing with these, we are, of course, moving through a region of thought in which manifestation is obscure, and observation extremely difficult. But none the less, I have known it to be asserted by qualified observers whom I have been disposed to trust, that where important researches, connected with some of the great laws of Nature, have been in progress, beings of some superhuman order have actually been present, watching or perhaps guiding the progress of human enlightenment in connection with the departments of Nature it is their duty to preside over. If this be actually the case, it serves to emphasize the main idea with which I am at present concerned, the direct bearing of conscious will on the laws of matter, which, at cruder stages of human thought, the science of the period contrived to regard as compatible with an atheistic contempt for all conceptions relating to a Divine origin. That worship of matter *per se* which characterized a certain variety of scientific thought, in the last century, is no less ludicrously discredited by the illuminated intelligence represented by the Higher Occultism, than the equally crude conception of primitive theology which, while certainly recognizing Divine Power as a factor in the Universe, assumed t to be operative in a way which we now perceive to be as little in harmony with the truth of things as the grosser materialistic belief. The notion that the Divine Being does no more than pronounce a word, in order that natural phenomena shall be evoked,

fully armed, *ex nihilo*, is hardly less absurd, hardly less derogatory to the nature of Divinity than the opposite belief that matter existed from the eternity of the past, and can, by its own combinations, give rise to human consciousness.

Even our comprehension of the natural machinery by means of which physical effects are produced may serve, for instance, to put a new complexion on the meaning of the familiar expression, "Let there be light." That the sensation in human consciousness of light is an expression of Divine Will, is emphatically one of the ideas I am eager to emphasize, but we know that the result is produced by the complicated mechanism of etheric vibration, and that Divinity had a more complicated task to perform, in providing for the sensation of light, than would have been evolved in the simple utterance of a decree. The behaviour of the ether, in conveying vibrations from distant sources of light, to the planets requiring illumination, is complicated to that degree that our investigations, as yet, have but vaguely hinted at some of its complexities; but the illustration serves to suggest the way in which the results aimed at in creation are obtained by what, relatively to early theological belief, must be regarded as elaborate and laborious methods; methods, almost certainly, associated with a stupendous hierarchy of subordinate agencies reflecting the Divine Will at every stage of the process.

But so far I have been dealing only with half the idea I want to convey; that which is, in a certain sense, the least important half, because it involves ideas which, independently of occult research, will probably be found floating in the thought of the period, though perhaps, in most cases, more vaguely than when clarified by a broad and comprehensive appreciation of the world's evolution, as a whole. The expansion of the idea into the region of intangible

cause and effect, is certainly not yet familiar to ordinary psychological speculation. But, to begin with, all of us who have been appreciative of Theosophical teaching on the comprehensive scale, will be familiar with the idea that what is known as the law of Karma, is a law operative on the moral plane, as definitely as the law of gravitation controls the region of physical manifestation. But that law is generally thought of as a vague expression of Divine Will; and even with such opportunity as may be furnished by familiarity, in some cases, with the evolution of specific Egos through a long series of lives, though it is exceeding difficult to recognize it as working with the regularity so plainly observable when we are dealing with the laws of physical Nature, nevertheless, we do broadly recognize the idea that conduct in life of a specific order is productive of definite consequences, following an inevitable rule, and not subject in each case to specific judgments resembling those of a human autocrat. None the less, however, when we think of Karma, good or bad, as operative to produce agreeable or painful conditions in the life or lives following any action in question, it is difficult to get out of the habit of thinking that the Ego concerned has somehow been the subject of a judgment. The *physical* laws of Nature seem so fundamentally welded with matter that it is only with a mental effort we can comprehend them as in truth the expression of a conscious will emanating from, or reflected from, conscious will on some level of Divine existence. On the other hand, the moral aspects of conduct, the rightness or wrongness of specific action, suggest instinctively the idea that their conformity, or non-conformity, with the intentions of God, is the explanation of their rightness or their wrongness. In this case a mental effort is required to establish the conception that that Divine Will is so marvellously

penetrating and precise in its operation that it cannot any longer be thought of as due, so to speak, to capricious spasms of admiration or disapproval, but is as uniform in its operation as the law of gravitation—as complex in its character as the laws of chemical affinity. It is Law, enacted once for all and applicable to all conceivable varieties of circumstances.

The conception with which we are thus inevitably faced by a profound study of the whole subject, is that the whole scheme of morals, in the broadest acceptation of that term, is governed by a body of law as comprehensive as the law of gravitation, as detailed as those which are studied in chemical laboratories, where the will of God, in reference to matter, is investigated by experiment and even guided, by the free will of man, towards purposes we may desire to subserve. And just as the physical law is operative, not merely with great masses of matter, but with microscopic morsels, or even with ultra-microscopic particles, so the moral law can penetrate the smallest crevices of our moral nature, dealing as appropriately with the pettiest shortcomings, with the feeblest aspirations upward, as with the grandest achievements of philanthropy or the foulest varieties of crime.

It must be allowed that we cannot easily escape from old habits of thought, nor give up the trick of thinking of any peculiar faculty we may possess as a gift of Nature, of any suffering we may be called upon to endure as a chastisement inflicted by a Divine Master for our good. We retain, in many cases, even the habit of regarding "our daily bread" as something which is given to us "this day," and for which it is decent, on our part, to return thanks as we sit down to table. Such habits of thought are pretty and harmless in their place, for people who do not care to penetrate, with open eyes, into the

mysteries of life, who are content with the simplicities of a reverent attitude and unconsciously content to wait till a later opportunity for realizing that nothing can excite a more profoundly reverential attitude of mind than a clear vision, reaching in, or up, to the actual truth of things. But the Occult student need not be the slave of any tradition, however useful it may have been in its time, and if the idea I am endeavouring to suggest is rightly apprehended, it can never present itself to any mind as at war with the reverential spirit. On the contrary, it is calculated to enhance our reverence for the Divine Power above, when we realize that the wisdom that guides its exercise is sufficiently profound, extensive, and penetrating to formulate laws which deal with all the varieties of moral condition to which the free will of mankind, an essential factor in spiritual evolution, can possibly give rise.

Nor when the almost infinite resqurces of free will within the domain of law are recognized, will the recognition of an all-pervading system of moral law be, in any way, confusion to the mind. At the present stage of average human development, that element of free will within human nature is hardly illuminated with sufficient knowledge to render it capable, so to speak, of steering a chosen path through the complexities of the law. But the law, itself, provides compensation for the embarrassments of ignorance while ignorance prevails, at the same time that it provides opportunity for the exercise of free will, when at a later stage more enlightened knowledge shall guide its exercise. Nor even need we cast aside the early anthropomorphic conception of Divinity which appealed to the saintship of a more primitive age, and responded to the spiritual thirst of humanity for a Divine object of worship, sufficiently like ourselves to excite adoration and love. We who are, at present,

concerned with the attempt to comprehend the meaning of the Higher Occultism, may be embarrassed, for a time, by finding it impossible to retain anthropomorphic conceptions of Divinity while, as yet, our knowledge is insufficient to picture in imagination the Divinity which, in some mysterious fashion, is at once, as it were, the fountain of the love principle and the destination of that principle as it works in our own nature. To suppose that the Higher Occultism, because it puts aside some of the crude fancies of humanity's childhood, embodies a hard, cold, or unsympathetic conception of Divine rule, is to misunderstand its whole significance more deplorably almost than this unfortunate result can be accomplished by any other misunderstanding. The essence of many religious conceptions may still be retained in our thought, even when their ecclesiastical presentation is put from us as out of date, and the complete grasp of the ideas I have been endeavouring, in the course of this essay, to suggest—thoughts so subtle that their clear presentation is a matter of extreme difficulty—will, for example, help to emphasize, rather than to discredit, one of the most beautiful phrases that can be borrowed from the literature of early religion. For our free will, with the help of improved enlightenment, may enable us, in conformity with the reign of law on the moral plane, to vindicate the profound truth that free will, itself, is an element of Divinity within our own nature, a power which may render us, each in our turn, capable, in a certain sense, of rising above all law, constrained though we may be, by relative insignificance, to obey it for a time. I do not mean that any free will of man can countervail any detail of the moral law pervading the system to which we belong; but just as a clear comprehension of physical law enables us to work out results on the physical plane, of which we may be

definitely regarded as the authors, so the ultimate comprehension of the loftier law will enable us, if that figure of speech be permissible, to ascend to regions of existence in which we shall transcend its operation, vindicating the old familiar phrase, in my mind a moment ago, that in Divinity itself—not merely in the sphere of manifestation on which our potentialities may be developed—" we live and move and have our being."

# THE HIGHER OCCULTISM

THE instruction given in ancient Greece to those who took part in the meetings at Eleusis—celebrated in history as the Eleusinian Mysteries—related, as we have abundant reason to believe, to super-physical knowledge concerning the higher planes of Nature, of the kind that has been freely promulgated amongst us in recent years. Such knowledge is that with which we are engaged in our study of the Higher Occultism. The eager pursuit of super-physical knowledge has been a leading characteristic of civilized intelligence for the last fifty years, within which time multitudes have come to know that communication between this plane of life and that to which humanity passes after the death of the body is possible. But the great movement—having a wider scope than that which, important as its influence has been, is narrowed to the consideration of experiences immediately following the physical life—the study of the Higher Occultism with which we are now concerned, originated with the Theosophical Society, the branches of which spread now over the whole world. This Society was, at all events as regards this country, the channel through which recent enlightenment has been poured, and thus it becomes necessary to glance back over the history of the current movement in order to appreciate the importance of the work it has been privileged to accomplish, as also in order to appreciate the dignity of the task which lies before it. And to do this effectually it is necessary to look back even farther than to those earlier beginnings of modern

civilization when the knowledge that we have been enabled to handle so freely was already in the possession of a few, but guarded for these few, in accordance with what was then held to be an imperative necessity, by secrecy of the most rigid order.

At a period long anterior to the establishment of the Eleusinian Mysteries, similar teaching was undoubtedly conveyed to students of Occultism attached to Egyptian temples, and what we know now enables us to realize that there never has been a time in the history of mankind during which the evolving race was left entirely without guidance from those by whom the great laws governing the whole evolution were correctly understood. In the childhood of the race, indeed, as we are now in a position to apprehend so clearly, such knowledge was only possessed by representatives of a more advanced evolution, trusted, under Divine Providence, with the regulation of the whole undertaking—with the nurture and education of the new race of which they were in charge. But gradually, as the more advanced representatives of this race attained something resembling maturity of intelligence, a few amongst them, qualified by exceptionally rapid advancement, were privileged to share in the wisdom of their preceptors. In this way, without having any detailed knowledge of the manner in which the progress was accomplished, we can appreciate, without the least shadow of uncertainty, the way in which the initiated adepts of our own human family first became organized as a distinct association, qualified by degrees to assume the responsibilities originally belonging to the representatives of the superior race whose contact with humanity is dimly suggested in history by vague traditions of Divine Kings. But for many millenniums the Adepts of our humanity held it to be premature to share their wisdom with the indiscriminate multitude. The

Occult student is enabled to appreciate the considerations which induced them to maintain this reserve. All knowledge in varying degrees, according to its importance, is associated with varying degrees of moral responsibility. Putting the idea in language with which most of us are now familiar, the Karma of action, distinctly at variance with the loftier purposes of spiritual evolution, becomes terribly emphasized when such action is realized by the agent as in conflict with the Divine purpose. This idea is susceptible of elaborate expansion, but in its simplest form is the vindication of that policy of secrecy as applied to super-physical knowledge which some of us familiar with the publicity rightly attached to the progress of discovery in physical science, are sometimes disposed to resent. Dealing, however, for the moment merely with the course of events, we have to recognize that all information accessible to human research connected with those higher planes of Nature, concerning which we are now able to speak so freely, was as a matter of fact guarded from public dissemination by the vows which, until very recently, precluded an initiate from disclosing the secrets of initiation.

But we are now enabled to realize that knowledge formerly included amongst the secrets of initiation is knowledge of a kind which, sooner or later, every human being must possess as a condition providing for his progress along the path of evolution marked out for him by the great design. To appreciate the true importance of that Higher Occultism with the study of which we are now concerned, it is necessary that the full significance of the idea I have just endeavoured to express should be grasped by everyone who takes part in such work as that we have now in hand. Earlier impressions with reference to the teaching conferred on students of Occultism in former ages, are generally to the effect that such teaching

must have been intensely interesting, that it invested the possessor with powers of a kind unfamiliar to ordinary life, that it was something so desirable in itself that no personal sacrifices were allowed to stand in the way of those who aspired to it, that no perils daunted them, that no temptations of a worldly nature could turn them aside from its pursuit. All such conceptions were perfectly sound as far as they went, but they failed entirely to interpret the great primary motive that inspired those who pursued occult knowledge with a correct appreciation of all that its acquisition signified. It is true that the Adept and, in a lesser degree, those who are advancing along the path leading to adeptship, acquire knowledge of transcendent interest, and powers the dignity of which cannot easily be exaggerated. But these rewards are not those which the enlightened aspirant for adeptship is seeking in his long and laborious efforts to make progress in that direction. That which he soon learns to realize, if morally capable of continuous advance along the path he has chosen, is suggested by the simple truth that the path leading to adeptship is the condensed epitome of the whole design which Divine Wisdom has sketched out on an enormous scale for the ultimate progress of all humanity. The supreme achievements of adeptship establish those who attain it on the moral, intellectual, and spiritual level which represents the culmination of all that is possible for the human race as such. Occult Science is so coneatenated altogether in its vast entirety, that these great truths can only be fully grasped by those who have completely assimilated the teaching now available for all of us who care to profit by it, concerning the whole design in which the human race is involved. But all who have profited effectually by the literature of modern Occultism will be in a position to appreciate the

force of what I have just said, and even those who as yet are merely approaching the great study, under the influence of that sympathetic feeling for it now so widely diffused, will no doubt be able to catch the significance of the fundamental truth I have endeavoured to express, and will thus be ready to perceive the manner in which the study of the conditions leading up towards adeptship casts a flood of light upon the future progress of the human race; while conversely, the study of the teaching we have been privileged to receive concerning the future destinies of the race, will invest progress towards adeptship with a dignity far greater than that assigned to it at an earlier period of thought, by observers who merely supposed that it was aimed at for the sake of its knowledge and its power.

Reverting now to the course of events, we have to begin by contemplating the attitude of the advanced occultist towards the world at large, at a period anterior to the recent outburst of specific teaching. Of course it was obvious to those already on adept levels, at any period of the past to which we may look back, that sooner or later the knowledge they so jealously guarded would have to be disseminated broadcast throughout the world. But their knowledge also enabled them to perceive that the whole stupendous scheme of human evolution was susceptible of division into two great halves. It has been the task of modern interpreters of Occultism to describe the characteristics of these two great phases of evolution in considerable detail, and we know that throughout the first half of the process—frequently described as the downward arc of evolution—the Divine purpose was gradually fulfilled by the differentiation of the diffused spiritual energy animating the undertaking, into specific centres of consciousness, these constituting, when developed, human Egos,

qualified to accumulate experience through a long course of successive incarnations, and gradually to arrive, in that way, at the midway station of the whole great journey, with no other duty, so to speak, up to that time, than those relating to their own individualization, to their acquisition of strength and capacity as separated entities each conscious of its own interests. Looking back indeed to earlier races of mankind anterior even to that mighty Atlantean race immediately preceding our own, we may realize, almost with surprise, from our present point of view, that the most sublime virtue we now are qualified to admire—and some of us perhaps, in some degree, qualified to aspire to—the virtue of unselfishness, did not even dawn as a conception on the human mind in the beginning.

On the contrary, there was a stage, during the progress of humanity along the downward arc, when selfishness was the law of progress—of such progress as was then desired in accordance with the Divine purpose. But from the midway stage of human evolution onwards, new conceptions of right and wrong became possible. Of course the midway stage was not reached by the whole human race simultaneously, but a considerable number of millions may have been standing fairly in the front, by the time the Atlantean race had lived through half the period of the life assigned to it. And from that period onward, it became theoretically possible for those members of the human family who had most completely fulfilled the programme of Nature up to that time to appreciate the loftier purposes of the further evolution awaiting them during the second half of the great evolutionary process—during the upward arc leading towards Divine perfection.

We do not know with precision how soon it became theoretically possible for the most advanced members

of our own family to receive, from the superior teachers who preceded them, the knowledge which we now handle so freely and describe as the Higher Occultism; but at all events, during the latter half of the Atlantean race some members of our own human family were enabled to appreciate the lofty design sketched out for their advancement, to detach themselves from the chaotic throng of their self-seeking contemporaries, and to establish here and there, even in that early world, centres of initiation from which their influence began in a faint, diluted fashion to radiate through the world, and towards which those whose spontaneous interior progress had invested them with appropriate qualifications were drawn into the paths of higher knowledge. But millenniums had to accumulate until thousands were no longer adequate to record the progress of the years, before the adept fraternity could contemplate the possibility of disseminating the wisdom they possessed broadcast through the world. Some elevated moral principles, as the progress of mankind along the upward arc proceeded, were of a kind which it was possible to convey with safety to the multitude, and that possibility found its expression in the foundation of all the great religions of the world which have emanated, as we see now without the possibility of mistake, from the wisdom of early adeptship. That suggestion need not be held at variance with the belief which assigns a Divine origin to some religions of the kind referred to. Divine purposes are worked out in all cases through subordinate agencies, and the comprehension of this, in many ways, is one of the illuminating discoveries that we are enabled to reach through the study of Occultism. But at all events, those who appreciate the spiritual and educational blessings conferred on humanity by religion, may readily erect on that primary belief the further conception that at a

certain stage of human progress specific knowledge of spiritual science may, without offending against the dignity of religion, be super-added to it. And what we know now is that for some centuries, adept observers of human growth in this fifth race of ours—the first beyond the Atlantean on the upward arc of evolution—have been on the watch for indications which may show that an adequate number of those left hitherto to the simpler influence and guidance of religious thought, might become qualified for the reception in its entirety, or at all events, in considerable measure, of that spiritual science from which religion, in the first instance, had its rise.

We can see now, looking back 100, 200, or even 300 years, that some experiments were made by the adept experts of this science, to ascertain whether amongst ordinary humanity people were ripe for higher teaching in a sufficient degree to justify its public dissemination. To trace the details of these experiments would be a considerable task by itself, which indeed some of us have attempted to carry out by studying the life histories of distinguished occultists throughout the Middle Ages. But passing over that, for the moment, we have to recognize that until our own time such experiments were held to be unsuccessful, and so we come at last—along the train of thought I have been following—to an intelligent comprehension of the circumstances that prompted the recent outburst of teaching from adept sources. That teaching embodied in the earliest Theosophical books was itself experimental in its inception, but unlike previous attempts of a similar character, was crowned with success. Sufficient numbers of people in the modern world—or leaving out of account whatever has been done in the East, I may fairly say in this modern European world of ours—have shown themselves entitled, by the readiness of

their appreciation, to receive occult teaching in such abundant volume, that we stand now in a position, in that respect, of intellectual advancement, far exceeding the corresponding position reached by those who, as a privilege individually earned and guarded by vows of secrecy, were taught something of the Higher Occultism when the Mysteries were celebrated at Eleusis.

# THE OBJECTS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

## I.—THEOSOPHICAL "BROTHERHOOD"

FROM time to time we may usefully review the gradually improving conceptions we have been enabled to form concerning the grand purposes underlying the Theosophical Movement. The phrases in which these were ultimately crystallized do not (though this matters little) reflect the ideas present to the minds of those who, in 1875, did actually, in a certain sense, "found" the Society. At that time it was the result of interest excited among a small group of persons frequenting Madame Blavatsky's rooms in New York, by the exhibition of her wonderful Occult powers. As Colonel Olcott explains in his *Diary Leaves* a lecture was given in September, 1875, at Madame Blavatsky's rooms by a certain Mr. Felt, of whom we lose sight afterwards, on the Adept Magic of Egyptian priests. Colonel Olcott then suggested the formation of a Society to study this subject. That was done, and though the title "Theosophical" was adopted (doubtless under occult guidance), Colonel Olcott at one time proposed to call it a "Miracle Club."

The word "Brotherhood" does not creep into its records till some years later. It was first used by Mr. C. C. Massey and his friends in London when they formed a British branch of the New York Society. They described its purpose as being "to discover the nature and powers of the human soul," and they went on to declare that they believed in "a

great intelligent First Cause and in the Divine sonship of the spirit of Man, and hence in the immortality of that spirit and in the universal Brotherhood of the human race." Colonel Olcott took this hint and developed the idea in a new statement of subjects as follows: " (1) The study of Occult Science; (2) the formation of a nucleus of universal brotherhood; (3) the revival of Oriental literature." The word " brotherhood " was afterwards shifted into the first place, but it was always accompanied by the qualifying term " Nucleus." It was not used, and should never be used, by Theosophists with the significance attached to it by those concerned with mundane politics or social reconstruction on the physical plane. The word in its theosophical meaning refers to the Unity of Divine consciousness on lofty planes of Nature, and to the nucleus for the reflection of that Unity on the physical plane that may be formed by theosophical students who appreciate the teaching aright.

The gross democratic meaning attached to the term " brotherhood " is an insult to theosophical teaching. The consciousness which expands into perfected humanity is, no doubt, in a subtle metaphysical sense identical in its nature with the consciousness, not merely of the humbler classes in civilized countries, but with that also of the crocodile, the dog, the Australian savage, and the Master of Wisdom. But this does not mean that all manifested consciousness in whatever vehicle we find it is, therefore, invested with equal claims on our *respect*. It is invested with equal claims on our *sympathy*, and that is how people who do not appreciate subtle distinctions drift into the misuse of the term " brotherhood." If the sheep and the guinea-pig are included in the universal brotherhood, well and good, but we do not ask the sheep and the guinea-pig to contribute their

opinions to discussions of the suffrage question, for example. And that thought is a clue to the fallacy involved in regarding theosophical brotherhood as leading to political socialism. Theosophical teaching concerning human evolution shows us the human family at present at very different stages of development. It rescues us from the old-fashioned blunder —arising from the ignorant delusion that each new child is a new creation—to the effect that all have equal rights. According to a phrase classical in political writing, all are equally entitled to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," but with very varied claims on the privilege of shaping laws providing for the fulfilment of that fundamental idea.

Thus, to let the formula in which the objects of the Theosophical Society are generally expressed distort the purpose of the movement to suit the purpose of any mundane theory of social reform is a very grievous blunder. From the beginning all qualified exponents of the Theosophical Movement have warned us to keep clear of all political contamination. The Society may include persons of very varied political opinions, but within the Society their only duty is to study and promote the study of the super-physical spiritual science gradually unfolded for our benefit and through us for the benefit of all mankind. The fulfilment of that duty should be compatible with perfect harmony of feeling within the Society, where it is needless and undesirable to discuss varied beliefs as to how the physical welfare of the community may be best promoted. We should not furnish unsympathetic critics of our real work with an excuse for pretending to regard us as a body of people entangled with questionable schemes for subversive changes on the physical plane.

### 2.—The Study of Comparative Religions

By those who concern themselves with it, this second "object" is liable to be misunderstood. By a larger number it is disregarded. It has a very definite purpose really. Briefly stated, that is, to bring out by such study the fact that at the basis of all religions worth talking of there are certain fundamental ideas, more or less vaguely hinted at, which are clearly set forth in Theosophical teaching. Theosophical writers have sometimes too emphatically emphasized the idea that Theosophy is not a religion. Of course it is not, in the sense that it has no hard and fast creed of the kind that most religions adopt. But no one who really understands Theosophical teaching is in need of any other religion. A real comprehension of the Divine Hierarchy, and of the laws governing human evolution, covers the whole area of thought and emotion which any religion at its best can cover (besides covering a good deal more). Not on that account will any true Theosophist repudiate any religion with which by race or nationality he may be traditionally connected. Here we have a very pretty subtlety to consider. If any Theosophist identified by race, residence, and habits of thought with this country is asked the question, "Are you a Christian?" what should he answer? To say "No" (because in his inner consciousness he felt that occult wisdom superseded all religions having a definite name) would be misleading and in bad taste. My answer in such a case would be, "Certainly; of course I am." I might go on to explain that I had no sympathy with the caricature of Christianity provided for us by most of the European Churches, but that would only be possible if the conversation were protracted.

The idea to enforce is, that any one who takes

up any particular religion and makes a close study of that, embellishing its crudities as far as he can by the results of his own thinking, is not doing anything which resembles the fulfilment of the second object of the Society. On the contrary, he is pressing against it. The more he succeeds in recommending to respect and attention any particular religion in preference to others, the more he is tending to defeat the second object of the Society, the grand underlying purpose of which—veiled rather than fully expressed by the formal enumeration of objects—is to convey to the large numbers of people now fit to receive it, the magnificent volume of knowledge concerning spiritual truth hitherto in the exclusive possession of the Elder Brethren of humanity.

This could not have been done at a much earlier period. Clumsy religions, brutal bigotry, atheism (the result of disgust developed among the most intelligent by the stupidity of priests and clergy), all stood in the way. But the experiment was made in these latter years, and has been justified by partial success. Multitudes all over the world do appreciate the gift of occult knowledge. Of course, besides these, many rush in without understanding the real purpose of the movement, caught by some phrase associated with it, into which they read their own prepossessions. They may impede the progress of the great work for a time, but there are forces behind this that must prevail in the end. Far beyond the limits of the Society the fascination of occult teaching is spreading through the cultured classes. To that growth we must look forward with confident hope, even if we, or some of us, get a little out of patience with mistaken ideas permeating the Society at this early stage of its existence. The Theosophical Movement is much bigger than the Theosophical Society, which must undergo great purification if it is, in future years,

destined to lead the Theosophical Movement. The movement itself is pressing towards a period when advanced thinkers will not be comparing medieval religions, but will be comparing whichever of these appeals best to their sympathies, with the grand spiritual truths conveyed to them by the theosophical revelation—recasting their favourite religion, if they cling to it at all, in harmony with these truths. At the end there will be many who find in the teaching which we still call " occult " all the religion they need. Others will prefer to decorate it with some of the phraseology of their earlier faith. Thus ceremonial religions will survive by their various names, and in the midst of all there will be a central block of thinkers, more or less indifferent to ceremonial, who will be content to call themselves " Theosophists," pure and simple. But the same ideas will permeate all groups, and great progress will then have been made in the development of that " brotherhood " the " nucleus " of which we, who understand our task, are called upon to " form " at this commencement of the stupendous religious construction, the beautiful results of which those adequately gifted with foresight can discern beyond the horizon.

### 3.—The Powers Latent in Man

The third object of the Society is less liable to be misunderstood than either the first or second, but is perhaps the most important, and, like any other idea expressed in concise language, is open to various interpretations. It is formally stated in these terms: " To investigate the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in Man." These words properly understood may be held to inaugurate the study of an entirely new science. The mistake sometimes made is to suppose that they merely prescribe an attempt to cultivate hitherto undeveloped faculties theoretically

latent in each of us. That, in most cases, would prove an extremely unsatisfying or disappointing pursuit. Most people of this age and race have come into the present life without the potentiality of such development in themselves. As with every other attribute we possess the potentiality of psychic perception can only exist as the product of some effort made in a former life. Many Theosophists accept *en bloc* the theory of Karma, and at once proceed to ignore it when they think of themselves. They are too often encouraged to do this by people endowed with psychic faculties who find these so natural and easily used that they cannot help thinking that anyone might acquire them by working for that end with sufficient earnestness of purpose. Volumes (reckoning such writing in the aggregate) have been written to assure candidates for psychic development that if they will only " lead the life "—be ascetics in the matter of food, drink, etc., etc.—they will be able to verify Theosophical teaching for themselves. One might just as well tell a weak, undersized boy that by eating underdone beefsteaks and using the dumbbells he would make himself able to go into the ring and beat a prize-fighter. The boy's Karma has not endowed him with an athletic body, and he must be content to use it for pursuits it is adapted to deal with.

Of course it is true that there are cases in which partially endowed persons may greatly stimulate their latent faculties. It is only a question of their Karmic condition. There are all degrees of this condition to consider. At one end of the scale we have people who are naturally psychic from childhood onwards, and who, if they take pains, develop into great clairvoyants and seers in mature life. At the other end of the scale we have those who, however gifted intellectually, morally, and physically, have no glimmering of psychic faculty and could not develop

that even if they made the struggle to do so the passion of a lifetime and ruined their health by asceticism. Between those two extremes there are all varieties of condition, and in some of these appropriate effort may give rise to results. I will only add, as a personal conviction, that in no cases will the results ensue from fanatical rules about eating and drinking. The finest clairvoyants and psychics I have known—and I have been privileged to know a good many—are people who laugh at all such rules and eat whatever they find by experience keeps them in the best health. I am assured on high authority that that is the only sound rule to work with. Our bodies are the instruments we have to make use of in this life, and whatever work we have to do, we can do it best by keeping the instrument in good order. It should go without saying that no one worth talking about makes pleasure the test of what is best for him to eat or drink.

But if it is useless for most people even to think of cultivating " latent " faculties in themselves, how does the third object affect them ? In an extremely important way ! The world at large knows nothing of the conditions that have been reached by some members of the human family—that *may* be reached eventually by all in some future life—and the work which Theosophists are privileged to carry on is the dissemination of the knowledge on this subject which they, if they avail themselves of the opportunities for study which the Theosophical Movement has provided, are in a position to promote. The laws governing the gradual development of latent faculties in the human family to which we belong constitute a mighty science. I have said that we cannot all make ourselves clairvoyant, but we can all, if we take advantage of our opportunities, become proficient theoretically in that science; able to help on multi-

tudes of others so far less privileged than ourselves. And that is certainly one way—I lean to think it is the only way—in which people who in the current life are beginning to be anxious about their latent faculties can really provide for their growth.

Amplifying the above generalities, the first thing the true Theosophist has got to do is to understand the goal to be aimed at—in other words, the place in Nature, the condition and powers and functions of those whom we speak of now as "Masters of the White Lodge." I do not much like the phrase, but it will serve for the moment. In the early days of the movement we were all led to say to people thinking of joining the Society: "It does not matter whether you believe in the Adept Brotherhood or not." And it did not matter then. We felt that membership in the Society would surely lead them sooner or later to acquire this essential belief. If it does not, they might really employ their energies elsewhere to better advantage. Do my readers realize, I wonder, how it came to pass that "Esoteric Buddhism" sent a thrill through the world on its first appearance? That was not merely or chiefly because the sketch it gave of occult science met an intellectual need, but because it made people think of the Great Adepts, and that gave them a chance of driving home a return current of thought. They cannot begin such intercourse. The first appeal must come from the aspiring human Ego. But once that aspiration is kindled, any results may ensue.

Now, of course, those who profit by later theosophical literature may learn much more about the Masters than they could gather from the first book. That, like every other theosophical book I have ever looked at, is replete with imperfection, for we who endeavour to interpret the rudiments of occult science are working on the threshold of infinity.

But there is much known now that was quite unknown to the early leaders of the movement, about the White Lodge and the methods of approach to it, and those are the subjects and ideas people should concern themselves with if they desire, in an intelligent way, to carry out our third object—to " investigate " the laws of Nature governing the development of the faculties and powers latent in Man.

# THE BORDERLAND OF SCIENCE

## ASTRONOMY, OVERT AND OCCULT

### I.—NEBULÆ

AN intelligent survey of our present knowledge and theories concerning nebulæ seems to have been given lately to an American astronomical society by a Mr. Vincent Francis, and I find it reprinted in *Popular Astronomy*. The paper is illustrated by a fine photograph of the spiral nebula in Coma Berenices, which happens to show very clearly a condition of nebular growth that I have insisted upon before now, and which is entirely supported by the writer I am quoting. You can see in the photograph how the central sun is condensing first before the spirals break up into planets. The contrary view was the defect of the grand original Laplace discovery. Laplace conceived the nebula to condense gradually from the outside; rings being formed, the outermost first, the central sun being left to the last. By degrees it was perceived that this would be a very un-nature-like process. It was putting the cart before the horse, or the child before the parent. Mr. Francis more properly talks of "the parent sun" in discussing nebular growth.

This whole department of astronomy has only been evolved since the development of the telescope. One may almost say, since the Huggins discovery that some nebulæ give a purely gaseous spectrum, making it certain that they were not star clusters. Since then we have got on rapidly. It was found,

indeed, that some nebulæ, certainly not resolvable into clusters, gave continuous spectra. Some consisted of glowing gas and some of solid particles. Then it became apparent that most probably all nebulæ were spiral in their shape, and we approached the conception that central suns were formed before the planets. Then (again with the help of Sir William Huggins) we got at a means of ascertaining the motion of nebulæ in the line of sight. It is an old story now, but fascinating as ever. The dark lines in the spectra of stars are sometimes displaced a little as compared with those of similar bodies in the laboratory. If they are displaced towards the red end of the spectrum, that means that the star is receding from us. If they are displaced towards the violet end, that means that the star is approaching us. The light waves are, in fact, in the one case crushed together, in the other drawn out. Recent work with this method at the Lowell observatory has shown that the great Andromeda nebula is approaching us at the rate of 300 kilometres per second, and other nebulæ show still higher velocities. But they are so far off, hopelessly beyond the reach of parallax, almost too far for guesswork, that some astronomers incline to think them outside our Universe altogether, an unacceptable guess in my humble judgment. The great nebula in Orion is, of course, the biggest. It covers a region of space not less than one which light would only cross in forty years. But we cannot suggest a maximum limit of its magnitude, because we have no notion how far off it is. When we call it the nebula *in* Orion, we merely mean that we can see it if we look in the direction of Orion. How far it may be behind the stars of that group is wholly uncertain.

How do we see it? Is it self-luminous? There is reason to assume that the matter of which it consists is rarer than the rarest vacuum we can create

here by instrumental means. How can such attenuated matter emit light? That is one of the puzzles we have still to deal with in connection with this subject. But meanwhile it seems pretty clear that there are some nebulæ that do not shine, dark nebulæ that play some mysterious part in the vast economy of Nature. The nebulous matter that almost surrounds the Pleiades is assumed to be dark in the sense of not being self-luminous, because its spectrum is identical with that of the stars to which it belongs, indicating that it shines with reflected light. Then the behaviour of Nova Persei, the star which suddenly blazed out in the constellation Perseus in 1901, suggested the existence in that connection of a vast dark nebula. It lighted up a region of the sky, the magnitude of which forbade the idea that there had been any transmission of matter across that space. The phenomenon could only be due to the velocity of light.

The paper before me makes favourable mention of the "planetesmal" theory, that has been much discussed of late in scientific reviews, bracketing it with the theory that nebulæ that show planetesmal knots or nuclei have originated from the collision of worn-out suns. Possibly! There is reason to suppose that such collisions are among Nature's methods in starting a new nebula, but it is just as easy to assign planetesmal knots to the aggregation of matter within the spirals of a nebula after it has been started in business by some other device—the condensation of etheric matter from infinite space, for example.

One word more while on this subject concerning a theory that some astronomers have favoured to the effect that nebulæ, in some cases at all events, may be so remote that they constitute Universes outside our own altogether. "Our" Universe, on that hypothesis, is the whole stellar system embraced by the Milky Way, and shaped, in the aggregate, like a

millstone, the diameter greatly exceeding its thickness. Nebulæ are more frequent in the direction of the thickness than in that of the diameter, and from that condition of things the hypothesis referred to has arisen. It has always seemed to me to rest on quite insufficient data, and I am glad to see that an American astronomer, Professor Barnard, dismisses it with confidence in its mistaken character. "We used to think," he says, "of these nebulæ as being at such vast distances from us, much beyond the limits of our universe of stars. Photography has shown in many ways that though their distances must be great indeed they are often well this side of more distant stars, and that many of them, perhaps most of them, are within our stellar system, and are no farther away than some of the brighter stars."

In connection with the services photography has rendered to astronomical science, Professor Barnard mentions one that is new to me, though doubtless familiar to experts in that line. Comets, but faintly perceptible by the telescope and showing no tails to the observer, are seen to have tails by the photographic plate. And such tails will sometimes be seen to drift away from the comet altogether, the plate following them for some days till they dissipate in space. That fits in beautifully with the theory that comets' tails consist of minute particles driven off by light pressure from the Sun, though we have to take into account evidence afforded by the plate that changes take place in the structure of comets' tails apparently due to forces emanating from the comet itself.

### 2.—Within or Beyond our Universe?

The American magazine *Popular Astronomy* is a very serious publication, claiming respectful attention, so I have been much interested in a statement I find

in the last number, concerning the well-known and beautiful globular cluster in Hercules. This is one of the most wonderful objects in the heavens when seen through a fine telescope. It consists of thousands of suns aggregated together in dense mass, so that the light of all those situated towards the middle is blended in one mighty glow, only those towards the periphery of the stupendous assemblage being discernible as separate points of light. Now it appears that one astronomer, Mr. Harlow Shapley, of the Mount Wilson Solar Observatory, has arrived at the conclusion—by what process of reasoning we are not told—that the cluster is distant from us to an extent that would make its parallax (if it had one) 0″·0001. Its distance from us, therefore, would be 100,000 light years, and its diameter 1,000 light years. According to this calculation, says *Popular Astronomy*, "the cluster is thus another sidereal universe external to our own." Of course some astronomers have always been inclined to think that some of the nebulæ are in this way other universes—a view I have always been disinclined to adopt. Mr. Pickering, I see, who contributes to the magazine just quoted an article on "the sixty finest objects in the sky," merely mentions the cluster in Hercules as a very fine object, and does not discuss Mr. Shapley's calculation. But he treats the fact that most of the clusters lie within 5 to 30 degrees of the Galactic equator as adverse to the theory that they are objects lying beyond the Galaxy, "although such may nevertheless be the case."

Now the line of thought that seems to me more definitely adverse to the theory has to do with infinitudes of various unthinkable orders, taken in conjunction with ideas suggested by the visible facts of our own Universe. By that last phrase I mean all the millions of visible stars embraced by the Milky

Way. The actual diameter of the space included by that wonderful girdle is a matter of conjecture, but roughly the Milky Way is often spoken of as probably about 50,000 light years away from us in either direction, assuming that we are somewhere near the centre of the whole system, there or thereabouts. Now planetary distribution within the Solar System shows us outer planets set at ever increasing distances from the central Sun. We have not yet worked out any map showing the distribution of Solar Systems in the Universe, but the old Hermetic philosophers had a favourite saying, "As below, so above." It is applicable to many observed facts of Nature, and if we start with the assumption that in the infinities of space there may or must be other universes, the probability would be that they are dispersed in space on principles resembling the dispersal of planets within the Solar System. The nearest planet to the Sun is many times as distant as the Sun's diameter. The nearest external universe to us ought on the same principle to be many times the distance of our Universe's diameter, and that, as I have said above, is guessed at about 100,000 light years, so the nearest external universe ought to be much more than that distance away. It sounds ridiculous to talk of 100,000 light years as an incredible measurement by reason of being too little, but in talking about universes we must think in terms of infinitude.

All this, I grant, is in the region of the most unpractical thinking in which we can indulge, but that is one of the fascinating attributes of astronomy—it takes us outside the area of low-down practicalities.

### 3.—Planets, Stars and Atoms

Like other sciences astronomy was paralyzed by the war, and very little new work was accomplished during its progress. But some observations were

directed to the question whether the satellites of Jupiter revolve on their axes or keep only one face to their august primary. To be more rigidly accurate: do they rotate on their axes only once in the period of a revolution round the primary, or more often? The question is full of interest, because it is always cropping up in reference to the interior planets, Venus and Mercury, and has a very important bearing on all speculation as to life in other worlds. The one celestial body that undoubtedly turns only one face to its primary is our own moon; but by common consent the moon is to be regarded as a dead planet, whether we accept (what seems to me) the foolish theory that it is a fragment of the earth torn off at an early stage of our planetary life, or the other theory that it is really the remains of an older world than ours, the outer casings of which were melted off when the nebular condensation that gave rise to our world was in progress. Now we cannot frame any corresponding hypothesis that would account for the satellites of Jupiter. Let me remind the reader of what we know about them.

Leaving out of account the later discovered exterior satellites outside the familiar four—and these may be merely masses of meteoric matter caught by the attraction of Jupiter—the well-known four are bodies of considerable magnitude. The two innermost, Io and Europa, to give them the names that have been assigned to them, are somewhat smaller than our moon, the two outer ones, Ganymede and Callisto, are somewhat larger. These have been the subject of study by Mr. Waterfield of the British Astronomical Association, and he thinks he has discerned markings which show that Callisto always turns the same face to Jupiter, while Ganymede, the outermost of the four, does not seem quite to do this, but has a period of rotation fifty-nine minutes less than the period of

its revolution round the primary. It seems presumptuous to criticize the conclusions of an astronomer using powerful instruments, but this theory about tidal action—the assumed cause of the single rotation idea—is so much in fashion just now that one can well believe observers falling in with it, prone to discover evidence in its favour. My main objection to it turns on very broad principles which seem to underlie all reasonable theories of the Universe. So far as observation enables us to check the conception, the purpose of manifestation on the physical plane is to provide for the activities of life. All intelligent thinkers have long since got beyond the primitive notion that the Earth is the only inhabited world; that the Sun and stars exist merely for our sake. We need not jump to the conception that all other worlds are inhabited by beings just like ourselves, but the more closely we study the Earth the more we find it teeming with life of one kind or another in every corner, life in forms adapted to the most varied conditions of heat and cold. Directly faith lifts us above blank materialism it becomes impossible to rest content with the idea that *any* of the other planets of the Solar System are mere purposeless masses of dead matter. They must be theatres of life of one kind or another.

Now the theory about turning one face to the primary has even been applied to the interior planets of our system. Venus and Mercury are supposed by some astronomers to turn only one face to the Sun. But this arrangement would make them unfit to be the theatres of life of any kind. One part would be burnt to a cinder, and the other frozen to an unimaginable degree. The theory as applied to Venus and Mercury is an insult to the harmonies of Nature, and if observers think they have detected markings the motions of which seem to imply the single rota-

tion arrangement—I do not say *tant pis pour les faïts*, but *tant pis pour* the current interpretation of the facts. As regards the satellites of Jupiter it is true, even though they should really turn one face to the primary, they would in their revolution round him turn all faces in succession to the Sun, so such light and warmth as they get from him would be evenly diffused. On the other hand, as against Mr. Waterfield's contention, we have to take first the all but universality of the habit celestial bodies have of turning on their axes. Secondly, the Jupiter satellites, whatever their origin may have been, are certainly not what our satellite is, remains of a world older than the primary. They are four independent bodies of considerable magnitude, and we must await the development of our knowledge to a far higher level than we have yet reached before expecting to comprehend their beginnings. "We are ancients of the Earth," etc., and the expansion of our faculties since the days of King Alfred have bridged the spaces of this world in a way that would have indeed seemed unthinkable for the earlier ancients of that time. Another advance of corresponding importance may enable us, or our successors, to cross in consciousness the spaces of the Solar System.

In another direction of astronomical research some American attention has been turned to Star Clusters, with results rather too speculative to command unqualified trust. Working with calculations based upon apparent magnitudes and probable (!) real luminosities, one observer of the great cluster in Hercules assigns to it a parallax that would give the distance across the cluster as 1,100 light years. The calculation is used to fortify the conjecture that such clusters are distant universes lying in space apart from our Universe, bounded by the Milky Way.

Except as giving us enormous magnitudes to think about, speculation of this order hardly seems interesting.

## META-SCIENCE

We recognize "metaphysics" as a formless realm in which the mind may wander and be free of the tiresome regulations that impede thinking when we are concerned with Science. But as the intelligence of the world expands, may there come into recognition, by degrees, a variety of thinking that shall be called "meta-science," based on a gradual comprehension of natural law extending beyond the realm of matter? An article on "Fatalism and Destiny" in the *Times Literary Supplement*, just published as I begin to write, suggests this question. The author of the article reaches no definite conclusions, and is mainly concerned with putting aside, in an attitude of lordly superiority, what he assumes to be a tendency among soldiers engaged in the war to adopt the theory of fatalism. Such theories "are strange, because they seem like the intrusion of a forgotten human nature into the rational body of our beliefs." The soldier in the midst of exploding shells is graciously pardoned for taking refuge in fatalism, and the author wanders, for three columns, around the subject, somehow finding comfort in a distinction between fatalism and "destiny," the value of which may not be very clear to the reader.

Now it is quite true that the war has made the whole subject, and many others that cling to it, much more insistent in their demand on attention than they used to be in the ancient days of peace. And the wave of interest in super-physical research and speculation that is spreading through the intellectual world has a force that seems likely ere long to bear down the affectation that the newspapers, as a rule,

still maintain—the pretence of assuming that all attempts to penetrate the unseen mysteries of Nature represent the foolishness of weak minds to be laughed out of court by the sane man in the street. People who have lost dear relations in the war are not easily warned off inquiries that may throw light on their fate. And when they make inquiry they find that belief in the possibility of getting definite news from those who have " passed on " is not confined, as they had been told, to weak-minded women and fraudulent fortune-tellers, but is held as a solid conviction by a large number of the most eminent men of the time. Then they are duly impressed. Such books as Sir A. Conan Doyle's *New Revelation*, Sir William Barrett's *Threshold of the Unseen*, and Sir Oliver Lodge's *Raymond*, and scores of earlier volumes of equal value and dignified authorship, make the old-fashioned attitude of supercilious contempt for Spiritualism too ridiculous to be kept up much longer even in Fleet Street. So we may be approaching a time when metaphysics of the old-fashioned order—vague speculation about the nature of Thought, and the intangible philosophies of Hegel or Schopenhauer—will make way for the development of a meta-science based on as definite a foundation of fact and acquired knowledge as the sciences concerned with the laws governing Matter. As for the fatalism of the gallant soldier taking his chances with the shells, if that fortifies his natural pluck we may well be content to let it alone, and perhaps meta-science will show the looker-on that even if the hostile shell bears no definite address, the long run makes it a matter of little ultimate consequence whom it hits. Meta-science seems to indicate (even in its present stage of development) that " no life is found, which only to one engine bound, falls off but cycles always round." Tennyson did not stop, when he wrote the *Two Voices*, to work out all

the consequences of this hypothesis, but amongst others it suggests that even if no fatalism guarantees the justice of each individual death on the battle-field, compensation in the long run is mathematically certain. And that view has the incidental recommendation of making the Free-will of humanity the ultimately dominant force in our progress through the ages.

The most troublesome impediment in the way of meta-science progress arises from the irritation many otherwise intelligent people feel when asked to pay attention to some alleged occurrence that does not fit in with previous knowledge. When new phenomena, like the penetrating power of Röntgen rays or the susceptibility of electric waves in the ether to be detected by suitable instruments, can be reproduced at pleasure, the irritation soon disappears, and the new discovery passes into the region of common knowledge. But sometimes a new discovery, though genuine, may for a time be elusive. Consider for a moment the phenomena of mesmerism, now passing into use in medical practice, though very imperfectly understood. The *will* of the mesmerist can be proved as often as you like to have a definite effect on the patient, but by reason of not knowing *how* it operates, irritation prevents the man in the street from believing the fact, though he might just as well disbelieve in the aurora borealis. But in truth few subjects on which we can speculate are more attractive to the meta-scientist than the rationale of the human will. People generally do not stop to consider that it is really the original cause of almost everything that is accomplished in physical life. No house has ever been built, no machine has ever been constructed, unless to begin with some human will had started the activities required to materialize the idea. But when it merely controls the bricklayer (through the intermediation of wages), and materializes itself by

slow degrees, people lose sight of the fact that Will has been the origin of the result. Future science has got to ascertain whether there may not be some more direct way of bringing Will to bear on matter.

### Atoms and Ether

I have referred from time to time to the theory that the electron is an atom of electricity supported (in the beginning at all events) by Sir J. J. Thomson and Sir Oliver Lodge. I have ventured to repudiate that theory in favour of its rival—the theory that the electron is an atom of ether carrying a definite charge of electricity. Of course, I am very far from being alone in dissenting from the views of the dignified authorities just mentioned, but the atomic theory of electricity must be regarded so far as the more orthodox view of the two, and a recent number of *Nature* actually heads an article with the words: "The Atom of Electricity." Now, of course, one difficulty in the way of general acceptance for the etheric theory of the electron arises from the view that has been widely entertained concerning the constitution of the ether itself. According to that conception the attributes of the ether embody a mass of paradox. It has been described as non-molecular, denser than the densest metals and yet utterly intangible to our senses, perfectly frictionless, interpenetrating all matter, which is at the same time passing through it with planetary velocity. Then this mysterious medium, at once denser than the densest solid, and less so than the finest gases, is undulating all the time at rates which paralyze imagination, and giving rise to all the sensations of light and colour.

But are we incapable of framing any theory that will fit the facts better than the ultra-dense non-molecular theory? The great Russian chemist, Mendeléeff,

answered that question some years ago in a book that attracted at the time less attention than it deserved, while now, in the midst of the electron controversy, it really clamours for attention. It is called *A Chemical Conception of the Ether*. I will endeavour to explain the argument, content to say, first, that there can be no one in the scientific hierarchy great enough to treat any views of Mendeléeff's with disdain. He was the originator of the universally accepted periodic table of the elements, an arrangement which groups them in octaves in a way somewhat resembling the grouping of musical sounds. The elements in each recurring octave show attributes corresponding to those of the previous octave. The discovery of this relationship has given rise to many other discoveries, for there were gaps in the periodic table as first drawn up on the basis of such knowledge as was then at our disposal. These gaps pointed to the probability that there ought to be elements that would fit them, and with that clue, one by one most of these have been discovered.

Within recent years, however, the discovery of the inert gases of the atmosphere—argon, helium, krypton and the rest—presented chemists with a new puzzle. There was no place for them in the periodic table. Mendeléeff, in the book I have named above, finds the difficulty merely the introduction to a new and brilliant hypothesis. All these inert gases form a new group or column by themselves, and their atomic weights fit in with this arrangement. But there are gaps in the new column! To make the arrangement symmetrical there should be two bodies lighter than helium. And this condition of things harmonizes with a belief Mendeléeff tells us he has long entertained that there ought to be two "elements," as yet unknown to science, lighter than hydrogen. He boldly fills up these two gaps with

bodies $x$ and $y$, and $x$, the lighter of the two, he suggests, is the Ether!

This presentation of the idea by such an illustrious representative of orthodox chemistry as Mendeléeff will be of fascinating interest to a group of thinkers on subjects of this kind, towards whom, though they may seem as yet in the vanguard of wild speculation, my sympathies are inclined to lean. According to that view the ether is the ultimate form of physical matter, from which all the familiar varieties of matter are derived. This view establishes the ether really as the "protyle" of Crookes' famous hypothesis as to "the Genesis of the Elements." It seems to me that with Mendeléeff's help we are bringing a lot of previously scattered conceptions to a common focus. Arguing from the analogies of the other columns, Mendeléeff assigns to $x$, or the ether, an atomic weight (a maximum value) of 0·17. Probably, he says, the weight is far less, as analogy suggests that its molecule contains only one atom. To interpret the argument would involve the use of mathematical formulæ that would be out of place here, but it helps to explain the fact that the ether pervades all space, disregarding the attraction of planets. The velocity of its atomic vibrations would enable it to overcome gravitation. And the dimensions of the etheric atoms would be of such a minute order that they obviously may provide a material basis for the unit charge of electricity described as the electron, while this view of the whole subject gets rid of what has always seemed to me the monstrous absurdity of treating *force* as atomic. One might as well talk of an atom of gravitation.

### Atoms and Misunderstandings

Science has so long been commandeered for the service of the war, that in reference to some of its pre-war achievements it has failed to make further

progress. Especially is this the case in connection with the study of the electron, so that a view I have long held to be a delusion, and have often ventured to describe as such, still commands general acquiescence. I rejoice, therefore, to observe in America the dawn of a clear understanding as to the real place in Nature of that elusive particle. Sir J. J. Thomson and others still persist in regarding it as an atom of electricity. A long and, as it seems to me, an extremely intelligent article appears in *The Scientific American*, under the heading, "The Relations of Matter and Ether." That all atoms of physical matter, even the finest, those of hydrogen, are built up each of many electrons, is a practically established fact, though opinions still differ widely as to the number of electrons in each. Anyhow, these are supposed, quite correctly in all probability, to move about freely within the space included by the atom, just as the planets of a solar system move about within the space embraced by each solar system. The article before me recognizes the electron as thus the unit of physical matter, while agreeing that it is also—or represents also—the unit volume of electric force. It has a dual aspect. I must here quote a few lines from the article to show how the writer glides into the view I have always maintained. "A question of moment here arises. Can the corpuscles of the ether, its unit particle, be smaller than this vastly minute particle of matter? Are we not warranted in suggesting that these may be in the same category so far as size is concerned? Yet if this is admitted as probable we cannot stop here. If these excessively minute particles, the electron and the ether corpuscles, are similar in size, may they not be similar in other directions? In short, may they not be identical?"

On the basis of this more than reasonable hypo-

thesis, the writer goes on to draw various inferences. We start with the conception of the ether as atomic in its constitution and filling all space—the raw material from which all physical matter is built up. May it not be susceptible of existence in different states as physical matter exists in the three states, solid, liquid, and gaseous? Then the atomic condition in which it fills all space and transmits the vibrations of light and heat would be its gaseous condition. In its liquid condition it might roll up into drops analogous to those of water, and become atoms of physical matter! I do not find that idea at all helpful. A much simpler and more natural view treats the aggregation of etheric atoms into physical molecules as a process accomplished by stages. Atomic ether does not appeal to our physical senses. Evidently there must be some minimum number of etheric atoms in a molecule to render it so qualified. Aggregations of lesser number would still remain imperceptible to our senses. But it would be extravagant to assume that Nature has no activities outside those limits. The minor aggregations of etheric atoms that do not come within the range of our senses must constitute so many varieties of molecular ether!

I have long been convinced that there are such varieties of molecular ether, and when this comes to be recognized it will open the door to a flood of new speculation concerning the phenomena of light, heat and colour. More than this, it will put a new and greatly more nature-like complexion on theories concerning the radiations from the Sun. We are all familiar with the calculation showing that the heat radiations of the Sun are wasted to the extent of some ridiculous percentage, because so little of them can actually impinge upon the planets. Suppose no heat is really wasted!—that what we call heat is an effect

developed by the molecular ether surrounding each planet; that the vibrations of the atomic ether of interstellar space are not heat at all! I am not daring to assert this. Future discovery may follow some quite different line, but the discovery of molecular ether—at present merely a profoundly plausible hypothesis—arising from the discovery of the electron, seems to me sure of accomplishment now science is getting out of khaki after the war.

Certainly we shall have to improve our present senses, or get some more, before we can expect to be directly cognizant of molecular ether, but we already deal with many natural phenomena beyond the range of the senses. Invisible light and inaudible sound are favourite subjects for scientific lectures. The ultra-violet rays can be detected by the photographic plate; the note of a whistle, too shrill to be heard, can be observed by the sensitive flame. Over and above the debt that optics in the future may owe to the discovery of molecular ether, it may go a long way towards breaking down the habit of nineteenth-century science, which used to make it so scornful of everything it could neither see, hear, nor feel. For many men of science, and for multitudes whose beliefs are based on personal experience, the new senses required to enable us to penetrate the mysteries of Nature farther than this has been done by merely physical researches, are recognized as beginning to flicker about here and there, and are loosely grouped under the title "clairvoyance." They are already available for scientific purposes. I hesitate no longer to include the subject in the range of scientific developments, partly because—as Sir Oliver Lodge has put it—those who disbelieve in the existence of clairvoyance do not express an opinion, but merely show ignorance, and partly because my own experience has very fully confirmed that view. Vaguely most people

imagine that clairvoyance has to do with fortune-telling and ghost stories. In reality it is sometimes directed to genuine scientific research, and, for example, to the study of the atom. Along this line of inquiry it has been ascertained (if we treat the method as reliable) that the number of etheric atoms (or electrons) in an atom (or molecule) of hydrogen is 18. Current scientific guesses on the subject vary so widely that some writers put the figure down as two or three, or even one, while others soar in imagination to the level of many thousands. The 18 theory is supported along the line of research that gave rise to it, by the observation of other atoms besides those of hydrogen. Many have been examined, and the result shows that in all such cases the larger numbers identified with heavier atoms, when divided by 18, give the recognized atomic weights of the substances in question. The discovery is full of deep significance. It shows the etheric atom, minute as it is, to be actually ponderable, and obviously supports the key number 18.

I freely grant that as yet the new senses required for scientific clairvoyance are so rarely found in adequate perfection, that they cannot be checked by use in different laboratories. But if a gradual *prima facie* belief in their occasional existence gains ground, efforts will assuredly be made to cultivate the faculty where it exists in embryo, and by degrees true scientific research will certainly be pushed beyond that *Threshold of the Unseen* that Sir William Barrett writes about with remarkable effect.

# ARCHÆOLOGY

## Relics of Antiquity

From Central America, south of Mexico, as the country narrows towards the Isthmus of Panama, the peninsula of Yucatan stretches out eastward. It is not a region that tempts civilized immigrants. The climate is not specially unhealthy, but too hot to be pleasant. Its half-million or so of primitive inhabitants have no mineral wealth. Nature endows them with mahogany-trees and tolerates tobacco, cotton, and the sugar-cane; but the only product which Yucatan sells to the outer world is henequin, a kind of hemp used in the manufacture of coarse sackcloth and hammocks. Yet from one point of view, that of the archæologist, Yucatan is one of the most interesting regions in the world. It links us with a past that lies far behind the few thousand years that engage the attention of the Egyptologist, and puts us in touch with a period of the Earth's history which used to be regarded as entirely mythical, but has emerged from that comfortless moral atmosphere and is now accorded a grudging recognition by orthodox geology. The fundamental fact that the Atlantic basin must once have been, for the most part, continental land, would no longer offend any modern geologist. The idea used to be ridiculed, but is now treated as a matter of course. Plato, however, is so far only partially vindicated. Geology tolerates the theory that there must once have been an Atlantean land, but declines to have anything to do with the theory that it was inhabited. This is the stage in the development

of prehistoric knowledge at which Yucatan comes in. And I am tempted to deal with the subject because one number of the *Scientific American* has an article about the antiquities of Yucatan that may help to get attention focused on their enormous significance.

Yucatan, says the writer, can well be called the American Egypt. The ruins of 172 cities, big and little, have been discovered, and not a quarter of the territory has been explored. Tropical vegetation makes the work difficult. "You might pass within a hundred feet of a wonderful old temple or pyramid a hundred times, and not discover it, so effectively does the jungle screen these crumbling monuments of the distant past." The article goes on to tell us that some of these ruins must once have been large cities, with not less than half a million inhabitants in each one. The writer, who seems to have had personal experience, has found one pyramid the most interesting among all these relics of the past. The steps on one side are fairly well preserved, and at the top is a platform, which was the sacrificial altar. There the priests "cut out the hearts of living victims." In a great quadrangle at the foot of the pyramid the inhabitants of the city used to gather to watch "these festal doings." Around were the "palaces" of nuns, "for whose special delectation these sacrifices were made. The nuns were the aristocrats of ancient Maya society."

The writer does not tell us from what authorities he derives his information, but anyone who wants to study the subject further will find all he needs in the books of Dr. Le Plongeon (an American archæologist, though with a French name), who devoted his life to the study of Mexican, and especially Yucatan, antiquities, and did much more than merely describe remains. These, like the antiquities of Egypt, are covered to a large extent with inscriptions in hiero-

glyphic character. The hieroglyphics seem the same as those used in Egypt, but the Egyptologists could make nothing of them. Egyptian hieroglyphics became intelligible when the Rosetta stone showed what language they spelled. But they certainly did not spell Coptic in Yucatan. The discovery of the language they did spell is the splendid gift Le Plongeon bestowed on the archæological world, and because the results offended the prejudices of the period (still clinging to the idea that Atlantis was a fable), they were never properly appreciated. But the scientific mind at the present day is more accessible to new views, which sometimes involve the restoration of very old views, and the stone inscriptions of Yucatan are already establishing some broad conclusions respecting the people of the old Atlantic continent, compared to whom the earliest Egyptian and Chaldean civilizations were recent stages of human history. In several places Le Plongeon came upon inscriptions plainly describing the final catastrophe that submerged the last great surviving fragment of the old Atlantean continent. The date of the catastrophe is even given with precision. It took place 8060 years before the period at which the event was recorded. Plausible guesses as to the date of the inscriptions add about 3500 years to the 8000 odd, so it was about 9000 odd B.C. when the stupendous cataclysm took place. And that only affected the last then remaining fragment of the original continent. Yucatan again helps us to realize in some measure what it must have been in its entirety. I was once intimate with a friend, who has since passed away, who was engaged in important mining operations in Mexico. He told me that in the course of explorations in that country and Yucatan, bits of an old road had been discovered in the midst of what seemed primeval jungle. These made a dotted line

on the map which extended down through Yucatan, ending abruptly at the sea coast. But again, farther on, bits were discovered on islands lying out at sea. Evidently the old road connected the cities of Mexico and Yucatan with other important centres in regions now covered by the Atlantic Ocean. Inscriptions deciphered by Le Plongeon relate to events happening in that region. One of his books deals with the history of a certain "Queen Moo" of the far-away past, who was driven from her dominions by usurping brothers, and migrated by a long overland journey to Egypt, where among other doings she introduced the Sphinx as an emblem that had previously been what we should call the crest of her family. When the world is at leisure again to concern itself with matters of mere intellectual interest, we may profit by renewed researches in Yucatan to the extent of framing a much more complete history of the Atlantean period; but we shall have to get into the habit of thinking in millions, instead of thousands, of years before we can map out in our minds the stupendous periods through which human evolution has passed. Americans do things thoroughly sometimes; and if they begin to realize that, while the youngest of the great nations in one way, they are also geographically the oldest, they may find it worth while to devote national efforts to the further development of the work which one of their own countrymen, Le Plongeon, has begun so well. They are apparently waking up to the interests of archæology if their leading scientific paper, the *Scientific American*, can be regarded as showing the direction of the wind. Besides its Yucatan article, recent numbers deal at length with the antiquities of Ceylon, though these relate to the yesterdays of the world compared with the remains of cities and pyramids hidden in the jungles of Yucatan.

# CATACLYSMS AND EARTHQUAKES

EVERYTHING, says a familiar proverb, comes to those who wait, even the vindication, at the hands of exoteric science, of information acquired from the great teachers of occultism, however widely this may seem, at first sight, at variance with conventional views. Within the last few years, something fresh has come out about earthquakes which has an important bearing on the physical history of this world, as interpreted by esoteric teaching and investigation. Almost everything that stands written in encyclopædias and popular textbooks concerning earthquakes is now out of date, and under the highest scientific auspices we are introduced to a view of this subject that begins to be in harmony with Nature's records in reference to the great geographical catastrophes that from time to time have altered the face of the globe.

The modern world is indebted to Japan for having done most up to the present time in the direction of elucidating the mystery of earthquakes. Certainly Japan has been better qualified than any other country to take a leading part in this investigation. It is favoured, if that phrase be admissible, with opportunities for studying earthquakes which no other country enjoys. On an average Japan endures three a day, not always on the scale of that which, in 1891, destroyed 10,000 lives, and involved the Government in an expenditure of 30 million dollars on repairs, but at all events of one kind or another. Perhaps for scientific purposes the little earthquakes

are most useful. When towns are shivering in ruins, and railway viaducts being tied up into knots, the most zealous seismologist may get confused in his observations. But anyhow, taking all sorts together, Japan has plenty of seismological material to work with. The examination of this has become an intellectual fashion in Japan, and a seismograph is as common an article of luxury in a Japanese household as a mantelpiece clock with us. The Government has liberally subsidized the investigation, and a distinguished English engineer for some time past occupied what may be called the Chair of Earthquakes at the Tokio University.

Professor Milne, the engineer in question, has thus become the leading authority on earthquakes, and as such he lectured at the Royal Institution one Friday evening, a few years ago. In the hour he had at his disposal he did not survey the various hypotheses that have been put forward from time to time to account for earthquakes, but it may be worth while to glance at these here, for the benefit of readers unfamiliar with the subject.

The volcanic theory has perhaps been most in favour. Earthquakes, it has been assumed, have been underground disturbances that have not been near enough to the surface to break out as eruptions, but have nevertheless shaken and dislocated the upper strata. Another notion has been that they were due to the influx of sea-water into internal cavities in the crust of the Earth. Steam, at a high temperature, it was supposed, would be engendered in this way, and an earthquake would ensue on the principle of an explosion in a steam-boiler. Yet another theory suggested the reaction of certain chemical ingredients coming into contact in the interior cavities of the Earth's crusts. Gases at a high pressure were thus supposed to be developed, and hence the explosive

energy displayed. All these conjectures are equally dispelled by the results of the Japanese investigations. Professor Milne did not think it worth while even to notice the steam and chemical theories, but he paid the volcanic theory the compliment of a specific repudiation. We have arrived at the conclusion, he declared, that earthquakes have nothing whatever to do with volcanoes. They are not local phenomena at all, not due to causes engendered in the neighbourhood where they occur, but to great waves or pulsations to which the crust of the earth is constantly subject, the effect of which is not perceived unless some rupture ensues. The huge, slow waves or undulations are described in the new terminology of earthquake science as " bradyseismic " disturbances, and they are going on just as freely and steadily in quiet regions, where earthquakes in the ordinary sense of the word are unknown, as in regions like Japan, or the west coast of South America, where they are frequent. But now and then it happens that as the bradyseismic wave encounters some irregular resistance or weakness in the strata it disturbs, something gives way, something cracks, and then a shiver goes through the region where that occurs. Such a shiver may in a few moments destroy property worth millions, and lives by the thousand.

Another influence productive of earthquake disturbance is described by Professor Milne as a "secular crush and flow." Observation has shown how wonderfully responsive the solid earth is to changes of weight pressing upon it. The deposition and evaporation of dew in the evening produces a sensible movement of the ground—sensible, that is to say, to the new and delicately adjusted seismographs in use for such observations. What, then, must be the effect of the regular denudation of continents that is always going on, and of the deposition of the mud

carried down by rivers on the bottom of the sea? The latest conjecture is that this pressure is sufficient to cause an actual flow of solid rock away from the regions of greatest pressure. We know, of course, that solid and viscous are merely relative expressions. Treacle is only more viscous than lead, which in the ordinary course of bullet-making is now squeezed, cold, out of holes by hydraulic pressure, and flows like so much putty. Lead is only more viscous than steel. Ice, it is now suggested, is only more viscous than granite. Every solid substance is viscous in one degree or another. Imagine a thick, evenly spread bed of soft clay; then imagine a weight put down on any part of the surface. One sees at once that the weight would sink into the clay, more or less, and that part of the clay beneath would be squeezed out laterally, heaving up the surface elsewhere. That is just what takes place in connection with the secular flow of the Earth's lower strata, and here we get into relations with a second great cause of earthquakes, the effect of which, in causing a rupture of the superior strata somewhere, is similar, apparently, to the effect of the bradyseismic wave.

As a matter of fact, earthquakes are most numerous in those parts of the world where the seashore falls very abruptly into deep ocean. That occurs to the eastward of Japan, and also on the western side of South America. But one of the most interesting facts now brought to light is that wherever an earthquake takes place the shock of it is really felt all over the rest of the world. The vibration passes, apparently, through the solid body of the Earth. We must leave off talking about the crust of the Earth. That phrase is derived from an early hypothesis that has been discredited for a long while—that has been at variance with all the physical teaching permeating theosophical information, and is now clearly untenable in the

light of the new seismology. The whole body of the Earth is plainly capable of transmitting vibrations of the kind that are transmitted by matter of the utmost rigidity. There is evidence to show that the earthquake waves are communicated from one part of the world to another with definite velocities, and they do not make their way *round* the globe, they pass *through* it by the most direct line that can be drawn from one point to another. The rate at which the vibrations are transmitted is extraordinarily high, in some instances approaching a speed of twelve kilometres per second, or double the rate at which a wave of compression could pass through steel or glass. Further than this, if this direct line passes only through a shallow segment of the Earth, the rate of transmission is less rapid than if it passes through a greater mass. That is to say, the most rapid transmission would be straight through, from any given point to its antipodal point. I say "would be" because up to the present time seismological observations have not been carried out extensively enough to have provided for antipodal stations corresponding to the regions of most frequent disturbance, but the character of all observations that have been made at places widely separated indicates an increasing velocity in direct ratio with the depth through the earth followed by the course of transmission.

The trustworthiness of the inferences already arrived at as regards the rate at which the vibrations travel, is shown by the fact that already it is possible to tell, from observations in England, at what moment an earthquake has taken place in Japan. At Professor Milne's seismological observatory in the Isle of Wight, he has been enabled on some occasions to anticipate the announcements of the telegraph in reference to earthquakes in Japan.

Once he announced—before any telegraphic news had been received—that such an event had taken place on a certain date, at such and such an hour and minute. When the news came in the ordinary course of things, it turned out that he had been right within an error of one minute only. In another case, when the papers announced that a great earthquake had taken place at Kobe, his instruments had given no indications to correspond. He declared the news to be inaccurate, and in due time it turned out to have been without foundation.

The importance of all this as bearing on questions in which theosophical students are interested, has to do with the light it throws on the old standing question of cataclysms. The drift of conventional scientific thinking for some time past has been in the direction of what geologists call uniformity. We do not see cataclysms going on around us at present, but we do see the gradual operation of forces that over very long periods of time may be supposed capable of superinducing the changes of land and water distribution that must assuredly take place. Rain and the rivers are continually washing down the soil of continents to the sea. In this way ocean beds are being filled up, and existing land surfaces denuded. Shores in some places are being eaten away by the sea, and in other places slowly raised, so that former beaches are now hoisted half-way up high cliffs. In time, it is supposed by the uniformitarians, these gradual processes would suffice to account for the largest changes we like to imagine. They would not account, however, for the violent convulsions of which theosophical teachers speak as having happened in the past and of which, indeed, advancing theosophical students, beginning to be able to apply their own powers of observation to remote historical investigation, are enabled to speak

with much detail. Those of us who comprehend the trustworthiness of investigation of that sort may have no doubt about the fact, whether modern science yet recognizes it or not; but it is always gratifying to derive from modern science confirmation of theosophic teaching. And while the local theory of earthquakes held the field, no such confirmation was forthcoming in reference to such events in the past as the destruction of Atlantis. Now we begin to perceive along what road the ultimate developments of physical knowledge will converge towards the conclusions of occult investigation. The brady-seismical waves of the new seismology fit in perfectly with a belief that, at long intervals of time, natural convulsions may occur on a very much larger scale than that of any which have been recorded within historic periods. Some of these, of course, have been fairly big. The Lisbon catastrophe not only killed 60,000 people at the seat of its chief activity, but distributed its influence perceptibly over an area, according to Humboldt's calculation, four times as great as Europe. As we know now, its influence must really have been felt all over the world, though in distant places too slightly to be measured by instruments then in use. The Calabrian earthquake of 1783 destroyed 40,000 lives. But, after all, disasters of this magnitude are not commensurable with the least of the great Atlantean catastrophes. According to the Troano manuscript, translated by Dr. Le Plongeon, sixty *million* people perished in the final Poseidonis convulsion, which changed an inhabited territory, measuring over two thousand miles one way by about one thousand two hundred the other, into so much ocean bed. For people to whom the six or seven thousand years of the historic period seem to afford a good basis for generalization, it naturally appears unlikely that if our Lisbon earth-

quake is the champion convulsion for that period, anything so out of proportion with it should have taken place six or seven thousand years earlier.

The bradyseismic wave system, taken in conjunction with the secular flow of rocks, puts a new complexion on all such speculation. Everything we know about vibrations tends to show that in Nature these movements are superimposed one upon another. In electrical phenomena this is certainly the case, and in fact the whole principle of multiplex telegraphy is built upon that idea. Occult investigation into the nature of the ultimate atom points to the same kind of complexity there. In the motion of the planetary bodies we have to recognize similar movements within movements. The diurnal rotation of the Earth is superimposed upon the much slower precessional, or second rotation. Whatever the great pulsations of the Earth's surface may be due to, it is more than imaginable that a larger and slower pulsation passes through it at longer intervals. Earthquakes of the secondary order, like those which afflicted Lisbon in the last century, are due apparently to a rupture of some rock body giving way to the pressure of one of the relatively minor undulations of the strata below. A pulsation of greater magnitude may easily be supposed to create a superficial disturbance on a different scale altogether, one for which, perhaps, a long-continued operation of the secular rock flow has prepared the way.

In addressing theosophical readers, a word or two seems desirable here on the question whether such catastrophes as those of the Atlantean age should be attributed to causes of uniform regularity, or to the intervention of the highest authorities connected with the government of the world, at crises when the depravity of mankind renders the extinction of life on a large scale a necessity of the situation.

The destruction of Atlantis has generally been talked of with reference to some such intervention. But everything we learn about the evolution of the race to which we belong points to the synchronism between the regular progress of natural law and the development of crises in human destiny. The recognition of this synchronism will not interfere with our simultaneous recognition of free will as regards the individual. No one is bound to give way to the temptations of his race or period in evolution, but taking the stupendous numbers concerned into account, it is certain that so many, within a limit of error, will follow the stream, while so many will strike out a path for themselves. In Atlantean ages the course of the stream was in a direction which, at all events for us, would be the direction of evil. Sooner or later it was inevitable that a condition of things should be developed which would require a violent remedy. One need hardly be surprised to find that the remedy under those circumstances was provided for by a geological crisis, towards which the Earth's strata had been moving all the while that the Atlantean majority were working out the moral necessity of their own destruction.

# POETRY AND THEOSOPHY

A RECENT article in the *Theosophist* deals with a subject that has often engaged my thoughts. Much poetry is deplorably unspiritual by reason of treating death as a dismal finality, instead of being the gateway to new life—" Mors janua vitæ." As Mr. Cousins puts it, a " revolution in Western literary arts would be brought about if the idea, say of reincarnation, could be given as full a place in thought as the current idea of a single life." I quite agree, but meanwhile a grand result would be achieved if poetry could help the world to realize that before attaining reincarnation, there is a period of happiness in the more immediate future awaiting all decent people on the astral plane. In our earlier teaching this was a good deal slurred over, as still wider aspects of truth claimed interpretation first. But in a recent book, *In the Next World*, I have endeavoured to show how vivid, delightful, and fairly protracted may be that astral experience preceding not merely the return to physical life, but preceding any experiences on higher planes that may await any given Ego. Therefore, the first great poetical reform I should like to see would be one that should encourage thought to range beyond the grave, instead of burrowing incessantly in that unimportant region.

Consider, for instance, one of the most beautiful passages in all poetry, Moore's " Farewell to Araby's Daughter " at the end of *The Fire-worshippers*. Its beauty resides entirely in the form, not in the substance. It is altogether a lament. Its exquisite

language is concerned entirely with the dear girl's body lying at the bottom of the sea. The Peris who speak the dirge are solely engaged with their efforts to beautify its bed.

Farewell—be it ours to embellish thy pillow
With everything beauteous that grows in the deep.
Each flower of the rock and each gem of the billow
Shall sweeten thy bed and illumine thy sleep.

Around thee shall glisten the loveliest amber
That ever the sorrowing seabird has wept,
With many a shell in whose hollow-wreathed chamber
We, Peris of ocean, by moonlight have slept.

We'll dive where the gardens of coral lie darkling,
And plant all the rosiest stems at thy head,
We'll seek where the sands of the Caspian are sparkling
And gather their gold to strew over thy bed.

For pure mellifluous beauty of expression those verses will rank with anything in literature, but what a ghastly blunder it was for Moore to spend his genius on thoughts about the dead girl's body, instead of thinking about the girl! I have endeavoured to suggest a paraphrase of his superb effusion—what he might have given us instead if he had come within the range of Theosophical teaching. To guard against misunderstanding, let me explain that I am not supposing that any rhymes of mine can rival Moore's in form. Moore—imperfectly appreciated in these days—was, among all poets that have ever lived, the supreme master of versification. Tennyson, a far grander poet as regards thought, has here and there touched Moore's perfection of form, but, as a composer of music in words, Moore is *facile princeps*. My effort is a concrete expression of wonder as to what might have been the character of his "Farewell" had he known what (I think) I know about life immediately after death. Here are the verses. They are not a "Farewell," but a "Greeting."

Welcome, thrice welcome, O Araby's daughter!
A glad voice thus greeted her advent above.
The form cast away into Oman's green water
Is needed no more in this bright realm of love.

'Twas fair for a while, giving transient expression
For Earth's passing use to a soul pure and white,
But that is now rescued from fleshly possession
Arrayed in a far fairer vesture of light.

That agonized plunge in the dark dreary ocean
Was no coward flight from pain, peril, or strife;
A gift to your lover, an act of devotion,
A sacrifice laid on the altar of life.

The World left behind you will weep o'er your story,
Will fancy that You lie asleep in the wave;
For you that has proved but the gateway of glory,
The dawn of new life with the pure and the brave

They bid you farewell, those who mourn your wild daring,
They shudder to think of your cold, lonely bed.
Oh! could we but tell them how well you are faring,
They'd share in your joy now your body is dead.

In depths of the sea that will soon melt and vanish,
On heights of the Astral your beauty revives,
The grief that once marred it this glow will soon banish,
With all that disfigured Earth's lowlier lives.

Nor shall you be saddened to think of their sadness
Who even may weep at your pitiful fate;
Now weeping, the better they'll share in your gladness
When they too inherit the life they await.

No graven stone tells where the form that once bound you
Restores to the Earth, from the Earth what it drew;
How little you care, as the scenes now around you
Enchant your new senses with limitless view.

But see! who approaches? Reborn with new vigour,
How needless 'twas even his fate to deplore,
With rapture he sees you! No flames could disfigure
That form. It is he! 'tis your lover once more.

There are many other well-known poems dealing with death that might be recast along similar lines: "The Burial of Sir John Moore," for example, though

those rather ponderous verses do not attract one to the task. Poetry, indeed, is dotted all over with blemishes due to ignorance of astral conditions, and perhaps it may be admitted that even Theosophical literature, apart from poetry altogether, has sometimes tended to chill imagination by leaving too much out of account the gradual character of the transition from this life towards the illimitable future of human evolution. Natural law is very patient with the pardonable cravings of personality, and lofty teaching is sometimes made to seem repellent by neglecting this profound truth, as was illustrated by a remark I once heard of, made by a lady who said she was much attracted to Theosophy but could not be a Theosophist *because* she loved her husband and her children! One can easily understand the peculiar variety of foolishness on the part of some ill-qualified exponent of Theosophy who gave her that impression. The charms of the higher astral life ought to find more frequent description in Theosophical literature, as well as in the poetry of the future.

# NOTE

THE substance of some of the various essays in this book has appeared in *The Nineteenth Century*, *The Messenger* (California), *The Vahan*, *The Pioneer* (Allahabad), *Lucifer*, and *The Theosophist*. "Expanded Theosophical Knowledge" was originally published as a pamphlet by the Theosophical Book Shop, 42, George Street, Edinburgh. "Theosophical Teachings Liable to be Misunderstood" and "The Pyramids and Stonehenge" appear among the *Transactions of the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society*. The substance of the "Super-Physical Laws of Nature" and "The Higher Occultism" was delivered in addresses to the Eleusinian Society, since merged in the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society.

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